

Essays in  
Indian Philosophy and Religion

P. NAGARAJA RAO

(091)

Philosophy

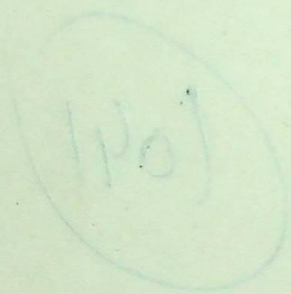


LALVANI PUBLISHING HOUSE

BOMBAY — NEW DELHI — CALCUTTA — MADRAS

*First Published, 1971*

Indian Philosophy and Religion



P. NAGARAJA RAO

© P. NAGARAJA RAO, 1971

Philosophy



PRINTED IN INDIA BY V. B. KHALE AT JAI GUJARAT PRINT-  
ING PRESS, GAMDEVI, BOMBAY-7 AND PUBLISHED BY S. P.  
LALVANI, LALVANI PUBLISHING HOUSE, 210, DR. D. N.  
ROAD, BOMBAY-1.



134

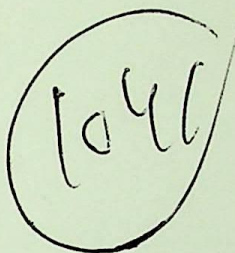
*To*

PADMA SRI V. VAIDYASUBRAMANI AIYAR

as a token of my love and affection for his  
Vaida Shraddha (faith in Vedic Lore), Dharma-  
Nishta (faith in Moral Values) and Guru Bhakti  
(faith in the acharya).



## Preface



The essays gathered into this volume cover a wide range of topics, but all of them are linked together by a common and continuous concern with the central problems of Indian Philosophy, the nature of Ultimate Reality and their implications in the sphere of Religion and Culture. The classical scriptures of India, the principal epics and the great *Purana* come in for a cordial and critical treatment of their contribution to the rich complexity of Indian religious thought and culture. In the articles on Sankara, I have attempted to state my understanding of his masterly metaphysics and its implications for the Fellowship of Faiths and harmony of religions. The essays in the volume first appeared in different journals and I have expanded them and effected the most essential editorial revision. This may give rise in the reader's mind, that there is a certain amount of repetition. But that has helped to secure unity to each essay. In this volume, as in my other writings, I have drawn inspiration, as indeed who has not, from my master and former Professor Dr S. Radhakrishnan. I thank all the journals in India and abroad for their kind permission to use the material published in the journals. To Lalvani Publishing House I owe my thanks for their interest in Indian thought and for agreeing to publish the book.

*Madras*  
*June 1970*

P. NAGARAJA RAO



1044

Preface

The essays gathered into this volume cover a wide range of topics, but all of them are linked together by a common and continuous concern with the central problem of Indian Philosophy, the nature of Ultimate Reality and their implications in the sphere of Religion and Culture. The classical writings of India, the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita and the great Puranas, contain in themselves a profound and original treatment of their contribution to the rich tapestry of Indian religious thought and culture. In the articles on Sanskrit I have attempted to make my understanding of his primary texts and his implications for the Fellowship of Religions and the harmony of religions. The essays in the volume first appeared in different journals and I have expanded them and altered the most essential editorial revision. This may give rise in the reader's mind, that there is a certain amount of repetition. But that has helped to serve unity to each essay. In this volume as in my other writings I have drawn inspiration, as indeed, who has not, from my master and former Professor Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. I thank all the journals in India and abroad for their kind permission to use the material published in the journals. To Lakshmi Narayana, whom I owe my thanks for their interest in Indian thought and for agreeing to publish the book.

P. Narayana Rao

Madras  
June 1970

## Contents

1.	<i>The Conception of Philosophy Through the Ages</i>	1
2.	<i>Indian Philosophy: A Preliminary Approach</i>	14
3.	<i>The Spirit and Substance of Indian Philosophy</i>	22
4.	<i>The Philosophy of Indian Culture</i>	32
5.	<i>Logic and Intuition in Indian Philosophy</i>	38
6.	<i>The Relation Between Matter and Mind:</i> <i>The Hindu View</i>	43
7.	<i>The Four Values in Hindu Thought</i>	48
8.	<i>The Hindu Concept of Artha (Wealth)</i>	53
9.	<i>The Concept of Kama</i>	58
10.	<i>The Concept of Dharma</i>	64
11.	<i>The Concept of Moksha</i>	72
12.	<i>The Doctrine of Karma</i>	79
13.	<i>The Value of Reincarnation</i>	83
14.	<i>A Critique of the Concept of Ahimsa</i>	87
15.	<i>The Wisdom of the Vedas</i>	92
16.	<i>The Quest of the Upanishads</i>	99
17.	<i>Srimad Bhagavata</i>	108
18.	<i>Srimad Ramayana</i>	118
19.	<i>The Gospel of Gita</i>	127
20.	<i>Buddha and Buddhism</i>	139
21.	<i>Sankara's Advaita Vedanta</i>	143
22.	<i>Sankara's Contribution to World Philosophy</i>	160
23.	<i>The Vedanta of Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda</i>	163
24.	<i>Essential Hinduism</i>	169
25.	<i>The Influence of the West on Indian Philosophy</i>	174
	<i>Index</i>	179

# Contents

1	The Emergence of Philosophy Through the Ages	1
14	Indian Philosophy: A Preliminary Survey	2
22	The Spirit and Substance of Indian Philosophy	3
32	The Philosophy of Indian Culture	4
36	Logic and Language in Indian Philosophy	5
43	The Relation Between Matter and Mind	6
46	The Hindu View	7
46	The Four Vedas in Hindu Thought	8
51	The Hindu Concept of Karma (Dharma)	9
58	The Concept of Karma	10
64	The Concept of Dharma	11
72	The Concept of Moksha	12
77	The Doctrine of Karma	13
84	The Law of Reincarnation	14
92	A Critique of the Concept of Karma	15
99	The Relation of the Vedas	16
106	The Quest of the Absolute	17
112	General Remarks	18
117	Special Remarks	19
122	The Concept of God	20
127	Religion and Philosophy	21
143	Summary of the Author's View	22
150	Summary of the Author's View	23
157	The Philosophy of the Bhagavad-Gita and the Upanishads	24
169	General Remarks	25
174	The Influence of the West on Indian Philosophy	26
182	Index	



*Essays in  
Indian Philosophy and Religion*

Essays in  
Indian Philosophy and Religion

## 1. *The Conception of Philosophy Through the Ages\**

THE CONCEPT of Philosophy is as old as the Greeks. In a general way, it can be defined as the intellectual activity arising from the reflective consciousness of man. In the course of evolution, man felt that he could not live without understanding the meaning of life, without getting a systematic view of the universe in which he lived and of his place in it. To wonder and to reflect, to construct ideals and to criticize not only others' but also one's own acts, are as much the characteristic of man as his impulse to eat, drink and be merry. Many do not bother to think of getting at a systematic and rational picture of life. The incessant hurry, the exacting task of getting enough to live comfortably, the petty ambition to outdo one's neighbour, and, above all, the vanity to be considered successful in society, leave little room for the average man to philosophize. And yet, it is true that every human being is a potential philosopher. It is argued that the choice before man is not one of philosophy and no philosophy, but between a systematic philosophy and an unsystematic one. Man is defined variously, as a 'rational animal,' a 'metaphysical being,' and an 'interrogating creature.' No doubt, all this is true in a sense. To describe any diffuse and vague speculation, and the intermittent moods of questioning carried out in a haphazard way, as philosophy in the primary sense of the term, is not correct.

---

\*Presidential address, History of Philosophy Section, Indian Philosophical Congress, Waltair, 1960.



The reflective consciousness does not arise in man accidentally. It does not grow like grass. I am afraid it is not even natural or normal in man. Nature tends to lead men to live as extroverts and rivets man's attachment to outward things. The reflective consciousness arises in very few people. It is the result of the discriminating faculty in man. Those who do not see any necessity to investigate the meaning of life are legion. The emergence of the inquisitive awareness in man, and his feeling of dissatisfaction with his piecemeal living, is the result of the power of thought in him. The mere emergence of the reflective spirit is only an occasion for philosophy. Men are able to philosophize well only if they have the necessary intellectual equipment, skill in observing things, and above all, the required integrity to pursue their thoughts to their logical end.

The term philosophy, as understood in the West (of course there are exceptions), is a definite, unique method of understanding and tackling problems. It is an intellectual interpretation of Reality. It affirms the primacy of reason over the other faculties. It is the acceptance of examined beliefs. It argues its case and does not simply assert it. It satisfies the demands of reason and does not surrender them. It seeks truth in an objective manner. Its transactions are open to inspection by all. It is not a body of private doctrines given by a Guru to be swallowed. It questions the postulates of Science. It does not accept things on faith or trust. It examines the instruments of knowledge and uses them. It, also does not assert where it does not know. It suspends judgement, it does not recklessly repudiate. The philosopher has to be free from prejudice, must be calm and unruffled in his enquiries. He must have an open mind and respect evidence. He must be cautious, and uncommitted to any theory. He must not be loud in his protests, nor hasty and excited in his announcements; nor dogmatic; nor give an air of infallibility to his findings. He must be astute, have an intellect capable of penetrating the intricacies of a problem. He must be alert to facts and errors. He must have a nimble intelligence to discern not only the defects in others' positions but also in his own theories. He must have the patience to doubt, the fondness to observe, the readiness to reconsider in the light of criticism. He must see that his findings are not vague and are given precise formulation. In this determination, he must exert



his utmost to infinitely reduce error if he cannot totally abolish it. Most of these characteristics, philosophy shares with science.

The kind of proof we adduce in philosophy is not the same as in science. In science, we demonstrate theories and facts in a concrete manner. Philosophical truths are demonstrable and verifiable in a logical sense. They are tested by the criteria of consistency and non-contradiction. Deductions in philosophy are logical and follow the rules of reasoning.

The philosophical method adopted by the Western thinkers in the past discloses great affinity to the scientific method. In their hands, philosophy tended to become more and more scientific. Even a great thinker like Kant doubted the possibility of metaphysics as a science, and admitted that it is possible only as a natural disposition in man. The subject matter of philosophy, according to some, relates to ultimate problems, such as: (1) Is the universe a fortuitous collocation of atoms, or is it the embodiment of a design or plan? (2) Has evolution any purpose, or is it mere change? (3) Is there a God? Is there a soul? Does life survive death? Are there subjective or objective, absolute or relative, intrinsic or extrinsic values? Traditional philosophers solved some of these problems in the light of reason. The theistic-minded philosophers made use of their philosophical learning to establish religious categories. We have a long list of philosophers in the eminent Gifford lecturers of St. Andrews, who have tried to bring together religion and philosophy by arguing the case for religious truths, not on the strength of revelation, but on the basis of natural reason. This has given rise to a branch of study called Natural Theology.

An opposition to this use of philosophy has appeared and grown strong during the last fifty years. Philosophy had developed into a separate academic subject, detached from other disciplines like Psychology, Religion and Science. The appearance of *Mind*, a quarterly journal from Cambridge, in 1876, and a little later the establishment of the *Aristotelian Society*, where philosophical papers were read and discussed, made philosophical writing technical and professional. Bradley, Moore and Russell contributed variously to this specialism in philosophy. The technique of philosophical writing became rigorous. In some cases, it aspired to be as exact as Mathematics. This school inveighed heavily against the use of picturesque and eloquent



expressions, metaphors and analogies. They discountenanced the use of emotional or colloquial expressions aimed at the edification of men. The working parlance of the philosophers got stiff with logical technicalities and charged with a strange jargon. Transcendental themes and diction became unidiomatic.

A powerful movement in philosophy—Logical Positivism—began in Vienna under the leadership of Schlick. It had among its members philosophers and mathematicians. This school was greatly influenced by Ludwig Wittgenstein, Moore and Russell. The Positivist attack on metaphysics is revolutionary. Most of them did not like the appellation of Positivism. Professor Ayer holds the view that a good deal of the radical doctrines of the system are found in Hume.

According to the Positivists, the problems of metaphysics cover a large number of extra-empirical and unverifiable themes: Reality, God, purpose in the universe, the soul, and immortality. These metaphysical problems are described as literally nonsensical and meaningless. The Positivist criterion of meaning is the verification principle. The precise formulation of this principle is a complicated matter. A proposition must be either analytical or empirically verifiable. What is not empirically verifiable in sense-perception is nonsensical. It is assumed that verification must always terminate in empirical observation or sense-experience. The only exceptions are analytic formulae, as those of mathematics. The school of Logical Positivism and the school of analysis concentrated their entire attention on method. They made a strong plea for the clarification of the meaning of words.

In their anxiety to emancipate Philosophy from the apron-strings of theology and religion, they have only succeeded in hanging on to the coat-tails of science and semantics. The traditional themes of philosophy have been dissolved. Philosophy is no longer regarded as a body of doctrines. It is more an activity. It has no tenets and is only a technique. Its function is to make propositions clear and examine them in the light of the principle of verification. The principle of verification is put forward as a definition and not as an empirical statement of facts. It is the way they verify the facts of the empirical world. If the traditional metaphysicians reply that there are other worlds than the sense world, where the categories of metaphysics are proved facts, the Positivist asks for the criteria of that world. He accuses the



traditional philosophers of attempting to make the best of both worlds. The Logical Positivists narrow down the world of Reality to the sense plane. Their system is itself an alternate system of philosophy. They have ignored the meaningfulness of many scientific concepts that cannot be verified. They have reduced philosophy to a mere analytical activity. At best, this school has contributed only to some clarification of the meaning of propositions.

It is the fashion with many of this school to look upon philosophy as the concern of the specialist. R. G. Collingwood, in his autobiography, gives us his picture of the ideal philosopher. "The Oxford philosophers have excogitated a philosophy so pure from the sordid taint of utility that they could lay their hands on their hearts and say it is of no use at all; a philosophy so scientific that no one whose life was not a life of pure research could appreciate it; and so abstruse that only a whole-time student, and a clever man at that, could understand it. They were resigned to the contempt of fools and amateurs."

The characteristic features of philosophy, according to this view, are not profound. Our study of the history of philosophy through the ages convinces us that philosophy is not so narrow a discipline as it is made out to be by the Positivists. The influence of philosophy has been striking on the conduct of men and in the affairs of the world. It has been looked upon as "the noblest of all studies" by Plato, and "as divine" by Lord Krishna, among all the sciences. It has even, in its speculative capacity, the power of liberating us from petty thoughts, fond wishes and foolish ambitions. It has the capacity to lead us "to truth in thought, justice in action and universal love in feeling." It may not produce results, but it secures understanding and restores perspective. The general influence of philosophy on man is liberal. The stress on the function of the critical intelligence as the only function of philosophy is a prejudice of the West.

This definition of philosophy does not take into account the entire gamut of human experience; it leaves out a great part of our experience. The undue stress on the function of analysis makes the analyst's method defective. The integral whole, as we know today from the Gestalt concept, is not merely the parts put together.

Philosophy is a synoptic vision, and not the summation of



the partial products of analysis. The integral view is not opposed to the logical view. But the integral view is not the mere result of intellectual cogitation. The traditional thinkers of the West, Plato, Kant, Bergson and several others, have accepted the method of intuition as the instrument for the synoptic vision. The acceptance of intuition as the philosophical method enables us to reconcile the claims of philosophy and religion. We discover things by intuition and interpret them in terms of logic.

Some of the modern philosophers of the West do not admit the validity of intuition. If we do not admit the fact of intuition and confine our channels of knowledge to sense perception and reasoning, it will be very difficult to bridge the gap between religion and philosophy.

If we exclusively rely on reason and the logical powers, we shall not be able to demonstrate the existence of the values of religious experience. Philosophy will turn out to be at best an intellectual pastime. It will be, "a flight from the objectives of the mind, of a lazy few." It would become a form of escapism and little more. The positive good that results to us, indirectly, from the art of philosophizing is at best a sort of mental discipline, akin to the scientific outlook. To reduce philosophy to a specific type of mental discipline, and to elevate the reasoning faculty in man to the top, does not answer to the needs of man; and it denies the fruits of philosophy secured by men in the past in the East and the West. Further, the elevation of reason and of the act of reasoning as the upper limit of man's endowments is uncritical.

The Western conception of philosophy, because of its narrowness, results in the divorce between life and philosophy. The philosophic quest has no effect on the life of man or society. The confinement of philosophy to the function of reason and the art of argument has left man high and dry. It fills the enlightened Western man with a deep sense of anguish; a feeling of nothingness haunting him to his grave. "European man," in the words of Berdyaev, "stands amid a frightening emptiness. He no longer knows where the keystone of his life is to be found; beneath his feet, he feels no depth of solidity." He has become rootless, and encounters the ghost of a terrific nihilism. The triumph of technocracy and science has impressed some to the extent of making them feel that metaphysics is irrelevant and that to seek



the meaning of existence anywhere is just moonshine. The theological creeds find that reason saps their faith and philosophy disturbs their beliefs. Dr Radhakrishnan describes man in a striking epigram: "To be ignorant is not the special prerogative of man; to know that he is ignorant is his special privilege."

The result of interpreting the term philosophy in a narrow manner has affected man's faith. The human being naturally believes; so, in his distress, he casts about for all sorts of expedients to get over his intellectual isolation. Some go into the orthodox camp of Fundamentalism, like Karl Barth. Some others, who are not totally sceptical about the powers of reason, walk into the fold of Neo-Scholasticism, as represented in the philosophies of Jacques Maritain and Etienne-Gilson. Yet others take to Logical Positivism or Existentialism.

The Indian concept of philosophy is more integral, for it discharges both its functions, the logical and the human. It satisfies the demands of the intellect and also the irrepressible aspirations of man. It gives a lead and guidance to man in the art of life. It promotes man's happiness. It does not identify the best in man with the merely logical element, nor does it minimize its true significance. Indian philosophy takes an adequate view of man, as it plumbs the nature of man and his destiny.

Human nature is not simple, nor is man a mere complicated machine. He shares a good deal of his nature with the rest of creation, but he can also rise above it. Man is acclaimed as a product of evolution, not born faultless and finished, but ground into shape by the shocks of circumstance in the process.

But, with all these limitations, Biologists admit that man is the finest fruit of evolution. The uniqueness of man no doubt consists in his power of reasoning, the faculty of imagination, the gift of speech, the capacity to dream and the possession of the will to bring them into effect. He has also the wonderful power of self-correction.

The uniqueness of man consists, in the words of Sankara, in his competence for knowledge and moral responsibility (*jnana karmadhikarat*). The great French writer Malraux writes,

The greatest mystery is not that we have been flung at random between the profusion of the earth and the galaxy of the stars, but that in this prison we can fashion images of ourselves sufficiently powerful to deny our own nothingness!



Man is bound by the space-time frame in which he lives. But he does not merely think in terms of his limitations. He has a sense of values that are eternal.

The predicament of man is well brought out in modern literature. The man of today has to face death, with the feeling that there is nothing beyond it, which unnerves him. The phenomena of change and decay, and the fact that everything is subject to time, makes him despair. Life is haunted by death, beauty by decay, strength by weakness; nothing abides and everything passes. The terrific fear of death and the consequent feeling of loneliness, frighten the individual out of his wits. He asks the questions, "Is death the end of man?" "Has man any other destiny than physical death?"

Man's self-conscious reason teases him out of his happiness. The uncertainty of life conflicts with his instinct of self-preservation. This produces a profound unrest, a radical insecurity, and an unsettling fear. All this results in a devastating experience.

Philosophy, Plato declared, is a meditation on death. The Indian conception of philosophy seeks to meet the urgent need of man to find the meaning of life in the midst of death.

Philosophy does not merely sharpen the powers of the intellect but also sustains one's ideals and delivers one from the body of death. Philosophy, for the Hindu thinkers, is, in the words of Plotinus, "what matters most." Death has no importance. The unique concept of Moksha integrates philosophy and bridges the gulf between it and life. Moksha is the master-word in Indian philosophy. Moksha is the greatest single aspiration of man. This aspiration is to experience a level of consciousness that is beyond the pale of time and space, of change and sorrow. The concept of Moksha is the chief among the fourfold aspirations of man. Possessions and passions are empirical values. They are instrumental to the art of human life. Without passions, instinctive drives, emotions and sentiments, there is no life. They form the physical basis of life. These two values are being regulated by Dharma, that is, the moral good.

Dharma is a regulative value. It regulates our activities towards the attainment of Moksha. Moksha is the orienting value for all other values. It is an intrinsic value. It is an end in itself. Moksha is the meaningful deliverance from the fear of



death. It puts a radical end to all types and shades of sorrow. It is a challenge to death.

Dharma organizes our passions and possessions, orienting them towards Moksha. It is the unifying concept that gives the comfortable assurance that death is not final extinction. The agnostic note and the sceptical questioning arising from a conception of philosophy as a pure rational activity, are quelled by the pragmatic concept of Indian philosophy.

When I describe Indian philosophy as pragmatic, I do not mean it in William James's sense, "that truth is measured in terms of the practical." Indian philosophy asserts that truth is the only sound guide for practice.

Philosophy is looked upon as the pursuit of that wisdom which saves us from all the thousand natural ills that flesh is heir to.

The concept of Moksha implies faith in a state of existence which is beyond all limitations. It is direct unmediated experience, and not knowledge by description. It is knowing by being. It is unconceptualized immediacy of vision. It is freedom from all types of conditional existence. It is the result of intuitive realization which makes us shed all ignorance. It dispels all our doubts and disbeliefs and overcomes all our tensions.

The Indian philosopher does not disparage reason, he only seeks to assess its limitations. He is neither an abject flatterer of logic, nor is he its determined enemy. He is a critical and cautious admirer of reason.

He submits reason to a thorough examination. He is of opinion that relational knowledge cannot give us immediacy; for it works through the mechanism of relations. The concept of relation is self-discrepant. Besides, reason cannot prescribe the ends and goals of life. It is an instrument, and cannot work in a vacuum. Reason is no doubt the finest instrument in the hands of man. But it is neutral, and can support any cause that seeks it. It does not, and has not the capacity to, know the ends of life, nor judge the values of the different objects of life.

Further, reason is not autonomous, as it is often claimed. It cannot decide all questions in the light of its own laws and principles. It is not even self-explaining. It does not carry its own rationale with it. Revelation is direct and immediate. If we merely rely on reason, we are sure to end on the agnostic note of Bradley:



that nothing can be predicted of the Absolute; that in the end we come face to face with ultimate doubt.

The Vedanta Sutra has a significant aphorism on the limitations of reason. Reasoning as a method is inconclusive. Sankara comments as follows:

Mere reasoning cannot be depended on in matters which must be understood in the light of revelation. Reasoning rests on individuals' opinion. The arguments of some clever men are refuted by others. On account of the diversity of men's opinions it is impossible to accept mere reasoning as a sure guide. Even men of outstanding intellectual eminence such as Kapila, Kanada and others are seen to contradict one another.

As against this, it may be contended that all reasoning is not unsound. Even this assumption is based on reasoning. However, it is possible for rationalists to argue that, if all reasoning is baseless, then the whole course of our practical life in the world will come to an end. We also use reasoning for detecting fallacies in others' arguments.

The author of the Vedanta Sutras and his commentators hold that ultimate Reality is posited on the authority of the scriptures, and that reasoning is to be used to support it. With regard to the conception of the transcendental category, Scripture is the final authority. Reason is of no use if it is not backed by Scripture. This does not mean that Indian philosophy is authoritarian and dogmatic. It is not the mere result of facile intuitions, nor would it be true to say that it does not brook the spotlight of reason.

One has only to turn to the pages of any Indian philosophical classic or any polemical treatise to be regaled with astounding feats of pure metaphysics, which at times baffle even the expert. The philosophical training is by the epistemological road. Every school has its own theory of knowledge and logic, through which it explains its categories. The Upanishad declares "that philosophy is not for those that are intellectually indolent." Reflection (*manana*) and inquiry (*jignasa*) are enjoined on all. The different problems of philosophy, e.g., the nature of substance, the theories of relation, the dialectics of difference, the



logic of identity, the concept of self-luminosity, are discussed and developed with perfect freedom, freshness and downrightness. There is no trace of intellectual cowardice in the arguments. Every philosophical system critically reviews the merits of the rival systems and refutes the arguments levelled against itself. In all these activities, logical reasoning plays a very important role. Through the ages, the Hindu habit of writing commentaries has brought to light many implications of the several philosophical positions and arguments and their nuances.

The history of philosophy can be viewed from different points of view. The systems of philosophy through the ages exhibit the reaction of powerful minds to the ultimate problems. The great minds of the philosophers have been influenced by the spirit of the age, the needs of the time, the intellectual and scientific findings of the period in which they formulate their systems. Some ambitious philosophers have seen, or want to see, the working of a World-philosophy, by instalments, in the different systems through the ages. Hegel writes:

The different systems which the history of philosophy presents are not therefore irreconcilable with unity. We may either say that it is one philosophy at different degrees of maturity, or that the particular principle, which is the ground of each system, is but a branch of one and the same universe of thought.

A similar attempt in India was made by Vijnana Bhiksu. Such an attitude, however, elevates one system at the cost of others.

The Indian tradition has another way of looking at the panorama of philosophical systems as alternate standpoints adopted by men of differing temperaments and distinct cultures. The different systems articulate each their integral picture of Reality from their own standpoint. Philosophy is essentially a conceptual formulation. No one formulation can claim the possession of the complete and exclusive right to represent Reality. To do so is dogmatic and unphilosophical. Love of truth restrains us from dogmatizing the view that we and our system alone have the monopoly of wisdom and others are in absolute error.

The great Symmachus, in his controversy with St. Ambrose, observes:



The heart of so great a mystery cannot ever be reached by following one road only.

Our sage philosopher Whitehead declared:

There are no whole truths, all truths are half-truths. It is trying to treat them as whole truths that plays the devil.

The different philosophical systems are ways of looking at things from different points of view. They are an eloquent commentary on the richness of Reality and on the relativity of human conceptions. Reality is complex, and it is not impossible that each system represents one aspect and at times over-emphasizes it. This over-emphasis (*ekanta vada*) tends to give us an incomplete picture of Reality.

The severe intellectual discipline is not for all. Many attempt it and only a few succeed. Its great fruit is clear and clean thinking. We may call it the morality of thought. Philosophical wisdom is not merely the work of a sharp intellect that is indifferent to moral purity. The Hindu thinkers affirm that passions, lusts and longings distort man's capacity to think clearly, to perceive correctly and reason rightly. Morality is a factor that goes a great way towards clear and correct thinking. The *Katha* declares:

Not he who has not desisted from evil ways, who is not tranquil, not he who has not a concentrated mind, not even he whose mind is not composed can reach Brahman through right knowledge.

The Mundaka text affirms that "ultimate reality is attainable by austerity, by right knowledge, by constant practice of chastity. The ascetics behold the truth with their imperfections done away with." Philosophical thinking is considerably influenced by morality.

Contemporary Indian philosophers have not been hampered by an uncritical allegiance to what is taken as the Indian Philosophical tradition or heritage. They have not taken refuge in it to avoid the trouble of thinking. They have selected the eternal and perennial ideas from their tradition and applied them to the



exigencies of each new period of history. They have not made tradition a prison-house in which to be lulled into quietude. They have constructed imposing systems of metaphysics which have taken the conclusions of modern science into account. Some, like Sri Aurobindo, have made a discriminating use of tradition. He observes:

There cannot be a healthy and victorious survival if we make of the past a fetish instead of an inspiring impulse.

Some of the contemporary thinkers have rebelled against several of the narrow doctrines of the Hindu tradition.

In the survey I have made of the concept of philosophy, I find that the term, as interpreted by the Hindu thinkers and sages, covers the required range and does not make it merely a pure intellectual game without any effect on life. The nature and functions of philosophy can comprehensively and collectively be best described in the language of the Upanishad:

Its nature is truth, it is the delight of life. It is mind's bliss, and it abounds in peace. (*Satyātmā Prāṇaramam mana anandam, santi samrddham amrtam*).

Such a conception of philosophy which includes all answers to man's needs, helps him to grow to his highest possible stature.

I have put forth before you a few of my observations on the concept of philosophy and its functions. I conclude my address with the words of the poet Hemachandra:

*Pramana Sidhanta viruddham atra  
Yat knicid uktam mati mandya dosat  
Mātsarym utsaryya tad arya cittāh  
Prasādam ādhāya visodhayantu.* (Hemachandra).

May the noble minded scholars, instead of cherishing ill-will kindly correct any errors here committed through dullness of intellect in the way of wrong statements and interpretations.

## 2. Indian Philosophy : A Preliminary Approach

THE GREAT CONTRIBUTION of India to world thought is in philosophy and religion, the twin passions of the Hindu mind. For over a period of four thousand years, scarcely affected by any outside influence, the ancient Indian seers developed their systems of philosophy. The vast literature of Indian philosophy ranges from the irritatingly brief aphorisms to elaborate dialectics. Besides the six systems of philosophy (*Nyāya*, *Vaisesika*, *Sāṅkhya*, *Yoga*, *Mimamsa* and *Vedānta*) known as *Darsanas*, Indian philosophical thought includes Buddhism, Jainism and Materialism. Most of these have developed on different lines, and *Vedānta* itself into many patterns. The very enumeration of the names of the systems and their several ramifications points to the richness and diversity of Indian philosophic thought. Max Muller observes:

If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and found solutions to some of them which will deserve the attention of even those who have studied Plato and Kant—I should point to India.... They are the makers of marvellous mythologies, the inventors of the most subtle philosophy, and the givers of the most elaborate laws.<sup>1</sup>

---

1. Max Muller, *What Can India Teach Us?*, Longmans Green and Company, London, 1919, p. 7.



Philosophy, in general, is the intellectual interpretation and construction of Reality. Man weaves different theories about it, some comforting him and others explaining his helplessness. To philosophize is the very nature of man. "It is only animals that are not metaphysical," said Hegel. The philosophical systems of the West aim at explaining Reality after the logical fashion. They make magnificent intellectual efforts to give us a comprehensive and non-contradictory account of Reality.

The Indian philosophical systems, though they soar to great metaphysical heights and exhibit great powers of argument, are still not to be construed as the results of the logical in man.<sup>2</sup> They are not attempts primarily to satisfy man's rational curiosity. They hold that all the values—Truth, Beauty and Goodness—are instrumental and not intrinsic. To them philosophy is a science of the soul (*Ātmavidyā*).<sup>3</sup> Salvation is the value of values; all other values are subordinate. Philosophy to them is "a way of life and not a view of life." It originated under the pressure of a practical need arising from the presence of moral and physical evils in life. An escape from these is possible only through a science of Reality. Philosophy is an attempt to seek something permanent and avoid the flux of births and deaths. It helps us not merely to reveal truth but also to increase virtue. It awakens our loyalties. It extends our minds and taps our energies and helps us to realize the vision of God. Hence Philosophy is pragmatic. "It is saving knowledge and not subtle metaphysics."

It is the practical aim of philosophy that is responsible for the blend of the religious and the philosophical in Indian systems. The great truths of religion in the last analysis are realized through the strength of our entire being. A traditional explanation of the ultimate religious ideals is attempted in philosophy. The religious ideal is not treated merely as a "facile intuition based on scriptural declaration" indemonstrable in terms of logical moulds. Nor have Indian systems made the unscientific effort to explain everything in terms of reason. They have combined in a judicious manner faith and reason. They have brought to

---

2. See Ninian Smart's excellent book, *Doctrines and Arguments in Indian Philosophy*.

3. See M. Hiriyanna, *The Mission of Philosophy*.



bear an "attitude of trust tempered by criticism." They have not accepted all that is in the scriptures; only the purportful part is accepted. Nor have they held that "what science cannot teach, mankind cannot learn." The attitude of criticism is kept within limits, though by no means silenced. They have marked out clearly the different "universes of discourse."

The Indian systems never forgot the necessity of changing the unregenerate man and his ways in order to enable him to realize the religious ideal. Religion according to them is "a system of education by means of which human beings must train themselves, first to make desirable changes in their own personalities" (Aldous Huxley).

Every system lays down a suitable course of practical discipline for the attainment of liberation. The good life is a prerequisite of the godly life. Most systems, with the exception of Materialism, hold that human beings in their unregenerate state cannot attain liberation. The common discipline prescribed is detachment. Most men and women love, above all, the pleasures of a life of indolence. They are torn by passions and weakened by distractions. The Yoga system of Patanjali gives an elaborate account of the ways and means of getting over distractions. Goodness involves one-pointedness. To act in a perfectly ethical way we need detachment. Disinterestedness helps us to break through our unregenerate selfhood. This selfhood (*ahamkāra*) constitutes the heavy, almost opaque substance which cuts off most of the light of Reality and distorts what little it lets pass. The Indian systems hold that renunciation is essential. They insist on the training and regulating of the natural instincts of men.

The doctrine of detachment has taken two lines of development. Some have laid great stress on the negative aspect of renunciation; hence, they have advocated the giving up of all worldly activities. This represents the absolute *Sannyāsin* ideal, involving the cessation of all activities. But with the advance of time, the negative aspect of *Sannyāsa* has been interpreted afresh by thinkers to whom it is not the giving up of all activities, but the performance of all in a spirit of detachment from self-regarding purposes. It is not world-renunciation that *Sannyāsa* advocates, but the renunciation of the sense of one's own agency and the fruit of actions. The detachment taught by the *Gītā* is



not stoicism; for it involves attachment to God. The *Gītā* insists on a life of activity performed as an offering to God, free from any sense of one's agency or desire for the fruit. It is this positive ideal of *Sannyāsa* that has informed the doctrines of all the Renascent Hindu thinkers, Dayananda Saraswati, Tagore, Gandhi, Aurobindo, and others. It is this aspect of the *Gītā* that is responsible for the active social ethics of the Hindus.

The six systems of Indian philosophy have some ideas in common. All of them are agreed in postulating a definite philosophical ideal to be realized by man. Attainment of that ideal is *Moksha*. The concept of *Moksha* (Liberation) differs from system to system. But they are all agreed in pointing out that the liberated soul is free from suffering, mental and physical, and free from births and deaths.

Every system lays down a definite course of discipline as necessary for the attainment of *Moksha*. The disciplines require the cultivation of virtues, social and individual, active disinterested service to society and uninterrupted and single-minded devotion to God. Some systems, like the Vaisesika, the Sāṅkhya, and the Mīmāṃsā, are frankly atheistic, and do without the grace of the Lord. They believe that salvation is the recovery by the soul of its own primal integrity, of which sin and error have deprived it. The recovery is effected by an unremitting moral life, and not by divine grace. Nyāya and Vedānta believed in the existence of God and the need of His grace for salvation. The Yoga system suggests devotion to God as an alternative method for attaining *Moksha*.

The systems in general accept not less than three instruments of knowledge—Perception, Inference, and Verbal Testimony. Most of them have yielded the place of primacy to scripture. Each of them has developed its own individual theory of knowledge. They have formulated their criteria of validity in knowledge. They have left no problem of epistemology undiscussed. Most systems to the present day use the logical terminology forged by the Nyaya system.

All the systems believe that the universe is a cosmos, not a chaos. They postulate a central moral purpose governing the universe. Hence the good we do in this life is not without its reward; the evil takes its due toll. The universe is law-abiding to the core. As a corollary to this the systems postulate re-



birth as well as pre-existence. They subscribe to the inevitable Law of Karma. Karma points out that the individual, and not a mysterious fate, is responsible for his acts. The conditions of life are determined but not the will of the conditioning agent.

Some systems, notably Vedanta, envisage the possibility of *Moksha* in this very life. Such liberated souls are called *Jivan-muktas*. Such a concept is possible for Advaita-Vedanta because of its unique conception of *Moksha*. The realization of the true nature of one's own Self is *Moksha*. According to Sankara, the individual soul deludes itself into the belief that it is a separate existing entity with manifold limitations under the functioning of *Maya*. *Maya* is that delusion which is responsible for the feeling of the existence of individual selves. With the certain knowledge that the individual is non-different from *Brahman*, this separatist delusion is destroyed and the soul realizes that it is not the limited empirical self but *Brahman*. The prime cause for this realization is knowledge. The illuminating knowledge can be had in the embodied existence.

The different systems of Indian philosophy can be construed as steps leading to the philosophy of Vedanta. Vedanta in some form or other is the living religion of the Hindus. The view that the various systems represent a hierarchy leading to Vedanta secures us a synoptic standpoint, though it goes against the relative independence of the different systems. Every system states *in extenso* the positions of the rival schools and offers elaborate refutations. Each has a long line of development which explains its distinctive doctrines.

Of the six, Nyaya and Vaishesika go together. They represent the pluralistic and realistic phases of Indian philosophic thought. The great contribution of the Nyaya system is its elaborate organon of critical and scientific investigation. All the problems pertaining to the theory of knowledge, together with the possible pitfalls and fallacies, have been set forth in a lucid manner. The Nyaya categories have supplied the Indian thinkers, through centuries, with the means of discriminating quickly and surely the valid from the false inference. Traditional students of Indian philosophy hold that the study of the Nyaya system is indispensable to the study of all the other systems. On the philosophical side, the school admits the existence of matter, the plurality of souls, and God. A thorough knowledge of



the sixteen categories of the Nyaya system, together with an unremitting moral life, secures salvation for the soul. God in the Nyaya is established with the aid of inference, and scripture is defended as valid because it is the written word of the Lord. Matter in its ultimate form is atomic, and God the efficient cause of the universe. Liberation consists in the attainment of an unperturbed equipoise free from delights and sorrows.

The Vaisheshika system is more a physicist's than a metaphysician's account of Reality. Reality is construed as coming under seven categories. The study of the seven categories constitutes the chief doctrine of the system. The atomic theory of the Vaisheshika does not admit the existence of god. It represents the radical, pluralistic elements in Indian thought.

The Sankhya is the most artistic of the systems. It postulates a plurality of souls and an inert, undifferentiated matter (*Prakrti*). It was the first to discover that movement in life and intelligent action are not the results of the mechanical processes of matter. It postulated evolution as resulting from the involvement of the soul with matter. The entire universe is treated as the result of the evolution of *Prakrti*. Twenty-three evolutes are recounted. The sorrows of men are attributed to the erroneous identification of the *Purusa* (Soul) with the workings of *Prakrti*: Matter alone evolves and *Purusa* is like the lotus untouched by water. Right knowledge is the means to liberation. This system has no use for God. The realized soul is free from sorrows. The Sankhya system represents the dualistic phase of Indian thought.

The Yoga system of Patanjali accepts the categories of the Sankhya system and adds God as an Ideal. The discriminatory knowledge of *Purusa* and *Prakrti*, Patanjali holds, can be secured by the practice of the eightfold path of Yoga. It consists in the cultivation of virtues, physical and mental. Exercises in the control of the breath and in withdrawal from sense objects are advocated. Constant uninterrupted meditation is said to mark the end of Yoga. Yogic experience is the final illumination of philosophic truth. An alternative to Yoga is devotion to the Lord. The great lesson of Yoga to our distracted and war-shattered world is the lesson of the value of peace. Yoga points out that there are a great many faculties in man to which he can have access, provided he makes the effort. Extraordinary powers



of certain individuals, for example, clairvoyance and telepathy, are nothing external to man. They are unawakened faculties in each of us. Yoga helps us to explore and use the great psychic and physical capacities of men.

The Mimamsa system of Jaimini is the most elaborate of the systems. It represents the school of ethical idealism. The Prabhakara school of the Mimamsakas has no use for the existence of God. All the Mimamsakas agree that the Vedas are eternal and not composed by any being. They believe that the universe is a moral order completely determined and governed by the Vedic deities. Every act is said to produce merit if it is good, and demerit if it is bad. The several acts of men create an unseen potency called *Adrsta*, which rewards men with heaven and punishes them with hell. They hold that life is governed by action and reaction. This system is utilitarian and is based on the theory of rewards and punishments.

The most important living system of Indian philosophy is the Vedanta. It is based on the three authoritative Hindu scriptures: the *Upanishads*, the *Gita*, and the *Vedanta Sstras*. The first great school of Vedanta is the Advaita of Sankara. Sankara refuted the dualistic interpretation set forth by the Sankhyas. Further, he rejected the Mimamsaka's contention that ritualistic action is the prime purport of the scriptures. The most distinguishing feature of Advaita Vedanta is the conception of the *Nirguna Brahman* (the attributeless Deity), as the ultimate goal and the only Reality. This *Brahman* is said to appear, on account of the functioning of *Maya* (delusion on a cosmic scale), as the many. The many are construed as illusory manifestations of one central Reality, *Brahman*. The realization that we, individual selves, are identical with *Brahman*, removes the delusion. It is not mere knowledge but the actual realization of the Truth that saves us. Hence liberation is not something that is derived from the grace of an external God but is native to the soul. It is this spiritual realization that helps us to feel the unity of life in all beings. Theistic schools of Vedanta (Ramanuja and Madhva) represent powerful reactions against the Vedanta of Sankara. They hold that the supreme Lord of the scriptures is a supra-personal being with an infinite number of auspicious attributes. He is the creator, sustainer, etc., of this real universe. The universe is considered co-eternal with the



souls and God. They admit three eternal entities. At the same time they admit the dependence of matter and souls on God. Liberation results from the grace of the Lord. It is derivative and not native to the soul. It has to be acquired by a strenuous ethical life of service to society and devotion to God; yet mere ethical perfection does not secure salvation; the grace of the Lord is essential. We are eternal servants of God and not God in disguise.

Contemporary Indian thought has not deviated from the central truths of Vedanta. In recent times, owing to cultural contacts, Indian thought, especially the philosophy of Vedanta, has been restated in terms of modern knowledge by the great Indian thinkers of our century. The five different influences—(a) The reform movements in Hinduism, such as the Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj, and the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement; (b) the religious philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, (c) the idealism of Dr Radhakrishnan, (d) Tagore's poetic approach to Vedanta, and (e) Sri Aurobindo's organic view of Reality—are all varied modern presentations of Vedanta.

### 3. *The Spirit and Substance of Indian Philosophy*

#### SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE AND REASON

THE TERM "Indian Philosophy" comprehends the groups of philosophical systems that have originated from the spiritual experience of the sages of ancient India, subsequently elaborated into systems of thought and explained in terms of reason and logic. They are called *darshanas*. They are not the fruits of mere intellectual speculation.

The antiquity of Indian philosophic thought has not remained a mere matter of history. It has had a living and growing influence on the thought and life of Indians through thirty centuries. It has preserved its spirit through the ages in spite of repeated invasions, social convulsions and frequent upheavals through all the vicissitudes of India's fortune. The spirit of Indian philosophic thought has a strange vitality, a strong and sound instinct for life, which has made it *mrityunjaya* (triumphant over death). In every age we have some representative of the philosophic spirit of India. No age is without its witness.

Indian philosophic thought has permeated all aspects of Indian life and literature. It has determined and coloured the themes of Indian drama, literature and art, the social structure and ethical ideals; and its influence is lasting. One of the living systems of Indian philosophy, the Vedanta, has become to some Western intellectuals a solace and a solution to the vexed problems of the world. They consider that it offers the central principles of the universal religion we need today.



Tradition divides Indian philosophy into two groups. The orthodox group (*astika darshanas*), which consists of *Nyaya*, *Vaisesika*, *Sāṅkhya*, *Yoga*, *Mimāṃsa* and *Vedānta*, believes in the authority of the Vedas and gives allegiance to it. Of this group of six systems the *Mimāṃsa* and the *Vedānta* base themselves directly on the teaching of the Vedas and accept nothing that goes contrary to them. They make use of reason to explain the truths of revelation, i.e., the body of spiritual experience of the Rishis. The other four systems of the group are based more on independent grounds of logic and reasoning, but they too, are not opposed to the scriptures. Not content merely to swear by the scriptures, they seek to confirm and reassure themselves of the contents of the scriptures through reasoning. The difference is in the distribution of emphasis.

The second group, including Buddhism, Jainism and the Chārvaka school, does not owe any allegiance to the Vedas, and hence these systems are called *nāstika darshanas*. They originate from the spiritual experience of prophets like Gautama the Buddha and Mahāvira.

All these nine systems constitute Indian philosophy. Before attempting a detailed study of them we should try to understand the general characteristics of Indian philosophy, its pervasive climate of thought.

Its range and variety are astonishing. All shades of opinion are present: Realism, Idealism, Pluralism, Monism, Dualism, Monotheism, Theism, etc. In the words of Professor Hirianna:

we have all the different shades of philosophic theory repeated twice over in India, once in the six systems and again in Buddhism.

Most of the philosophical systems do not make any reference to the personalities that set them forth.

They cared more for the truths they expounded.

The Indian philosophical ideal is different from that of the West. The Indian systems seek to attain a state of existence called *moksha*. *Moksha* is the highest good, *parama purushārtha*; it is the ultimate value. All the other values of life subserve the realization of the highest good and result in it. The Indian outlook is synthetic, integrated and centred in the attainment of *moksha*.



To the question "Why seek *moksha*?" the answer is, "the need for the radical termination of the sorrows of life." All the systems begin with a reflective examination of the state of human life and find in it a good deal of sorrow. *Samsara* is full of sorrow. Philosophy originated in India under the pressure of a practical need to overcome and destroy the three-fold suffering to which man is heir. It is the master remedy for the ills of life.

*Moksha* is the master word in Indian philosophy according to Sri Aurobindo. It is a state of perfection beyond suffering. The ideal of *moksha* is not conceptual. It is the result of integral experience. Mere intellectual study will not enable us to attain it. It requires moral discipline also. It is a religious ideal. It is beyond logic and also beyond mere morality. It is not the mere acquisition of knowledge or mere self-culture, but a certain immediate experience resulting from both. In that state all our doubts and disbeliefs are dispelled and our strife and tensions are overcome. This practical and pragmatic motive is the dominant note in all the systems. This has made some describe Indian philosophy as purely religious.

The object of Indian philosophy is not only to advance in knowledge or to find a correct way of thinking. It is more a right way of living. "It is a way of life, not a mere view of life." It is essentially a philosophy of values. The Indian philosophical ideal is a direct experience of Reality and not a mere intellectual mode of apprehending it.

The ideal is significant. *Moksha* is eternal. There is no lapse from it once it is attained, no return from *moksha* to *samsara*. It is absolute and never becomes a means to other ends. It is an end in itself. All the systems describe *moksha* as their ideal. The Nyaya declares that *moksha* results from knowing the true nature of Reality. The Sankhya speaks of the destruction of the three-fold misery (*dukkhatraya*) as the consequence of the knowing of what the system takes to be the ultimate nature of Purusha. The Vedānta declares that the knower of the Self overcomes all sorrows; that in such knowledge alone perfection lies.

The ideal of *moksha* has overshadowed the logical acumen of the systems. Yet an acquaintance with the polemical texts of the various systems will bear out their dialectical subtlety, logical analysis, formal precision and coherent interrelation of concepts



and doctrines. A study of these aspects will convince the student of the philosophical worth of each system. It will regale the most ardent admirer of metaphysics and pure thought, and the untrained may well feel baffled on occasions. It is clear that there is no want of logic in Indian philosophical systems. Reasoning and logic are their methods.

Indian philosophical systems pay great attention to epistemology (*pramanas*). Max Muller observes that the very first question that every one of the Indian systems of philosophy tries to settle is:

"How do we know?" The Mimamsakas have formulated the dictum that "the establishment or cognition of a thing depends upon the instruments of knowledge." Every system has given us its theory of knowledge, its doctrines of truth and error.

This leads us to the knowledge and function of reason in Indian philosophy. Philosophy is not, as in the contemporary West, a mere attempt to analyse and clarify concepts, beliefs and meanings of words. Philosophy is the search for an experience of Reality. The subject matter of Indian philosophy, however, is not the entire Reality. It is more the true nature of the Self. One of the postulates of Indian philosophy is that the Soul is in its intrinsic nature full of bliss. Moksha is another name for the realization of the true and native nature of the Self. The Self to be realized is not the individual ego that we are aware of. We mistake the ego for the true Self and that is the cause of our suffering. The ignorance of the true nature of the Self, which is free from all impurities, sorrows, is the cause of bondage. This ignorance is called by different names. Nyaya calls it *mithyā jñāna* (illusory knowledge). Sankhya calls it lack of discrimination between *Purusha* and *Prakṛti*. Advaita calls it *māyā* (illusion). Self-realization is achieved either through self-culture or, in some forms of Vedānta, through the Lord's Grace.

Every system attempts to demarcate the Self from the non-Self. The Self is the supreme Reality. This is the reason for philosophy in India being called *adhyātma śāstra* and *ātma vidyā*. It is the science of the Self.

Philosophy in the West begins with the analysis of experience with the aid of reason. But the term experience is narrowed to the limits of sense experience. Indian philosophy takes the



entire gamut of experience into account. It includes normal and super-normal waking and dreaming (*laukika* and *alaukika*), and deep-sleep (*sushupti*) experiences. Experience has two sides to it: the objective and the subjective. The systems of Indian philosophy are more interested in the subjective aspects. There are exceptions to the main trends both in the West and the East.

Indian philosophy accepts as instruments of knowledge perception and inference. Spiritual realization is a matter of experience. It is self-certifying and beyond reason. This experience is the ultimate authority. All others are valuable in the measure in which they lead to it. There is no demonstrative knowledge of Reality. The revelations that are set forth in the scriptures are *jnāpaka* (reminders) for us and not *kāraṇas* (makers) of our experience. It is this aspect that has made Indian philosophy scientific. The final acceptance is not based on a second-hand report, or on an inherited authority, but on direct experience. It is hardly fair to describe such a position as dogmatic. The student of philosophy has only fixed a limit for the working of reason. He has no distrust of reason, but he has assessed its limitations. Reason does not supply the premises for Indian philosophy. Revelation sets its working hypothesis, which is finally accepted after spiritual experience. Reason interprets, clarifies and works out the implications of the working hypothesis. The spiritual experience of sages is the premise for reason to work on.

Though the omniscience of reason is not accepted, it is made use of at every stage in the interpretation of the scriptures. It is one of the most important determinative marks of purport in finding out the meaning of the scriptural statements.

The Indian philosophers' reliance on scripture is not authoritarian or dogmatic as it seems at first sight. They only tell us that the philosophic ideal of *moksha* is beyond the purview of perception and inference. Sense-perception and reasoning do not exhaust Reality—"our reach exceeds our grasp." Revelation is the means of communication to us only in spiritual matters, matters beyond the reach of common experience.

Further, the findings of reason are inconclusive. Reason can be refuted by better reason. Reason follows certain premises. Logic is called in India *anvikṣiki*, i.e., "examination after." It



is not an independent instrument of knowledge. Commenting on an important *sutra*, Sankara observes:

We see how arguments which some clever men have excogitated with great pains are shown by people still more ingenious to be fallacious, and how the arguments of the latter again are refuted in their turn by other men; so that on account of the diversity of men's opinions, it is impossible to accept mere reasoning as having a sure foundation. . . .

Logic has the intrinsic defect that it cannot comprehend ultimate Reality or spiritual experience. It can only work within the scheme of the network of relations. All our rational knowledge is relative. Spiritual experience of the Supreme Reality does not admit of divisions. Relational knowledge cannot give us immediate experience of the indivisible nature of Reality.

The validity of reason itself rests on something that cannot be demonstrated by reason. If it rests on some other reason, we shall have to go on from one truth to another, which lands us in *infinite regress*. Such tests and criteria of truth as *non-contradiction* and *coherence* are not themselves obtained through reasoning. They are the presuppositions of reason. Hence it is that reason is given a limited place in Indian philosophy.

Let us sum up the issue. Spiritual experience alone can demonstrate the nature of Reality and the truth of scriptural declarations. Reason adduces the probability; it cannot give us absolute proof. Only that scripture which has purport is accepted. Sankara observes that "even if a thousand scriptural texts proclaim that fire is cold, one is not bound to accept it." The Upanishads declare that there is no admittance into the shrine of philosophy for those who are intellectually indolent or cannot, or will not think. The final position is: Scripture enunciates truths and philosophy seeks to establish them by arguments. Without the material supplied by scripture and faith, logical reason will be mere speculation and fancy.

All the Indian philosophical systems exhibit a two-fold unity of outlook. There is first the "spiritual unity" in their outlook. This is seen clearly in the common philosophical ideal of *moksha*, which is a spiritual experience, not an intellectual apprehension or an occult vision or a physical ecstasy.



The second is the "moral unity" in outlook. All the systems, though they give differing accounts of *moksha*, are at one in holding that it cannot be attained by mere intellectual study. The *Katha*<sup>1</sup> Upanishad declares that "the Self cannot be attained by instruction or by intellectual power or even through much hearing" (*nayam atma pravachanena labhyo na medhaya na bahuna shrutena*). The *Mundaka* Upanishad reiterates the same verse. The *Brhadaranyaka* laments the futility of mere intellectual learning:

Brood not over the mass of words, for that is mere weariness of speech. (*Nanudhyayad bahun sabdan vaco viglapanam hitat*).<sup>2</sup>

Intellectual study and reasoning must be accompanied by moral excellence and ethical virtues. There must be moral discipline before enlightenment. No spiritual realization is possible without a moral *sadhana* (discipline). The insistence on *sadhana* is common to all systems. The *Katha Upanishad* is emphatic on the point: "Not he who has not desisted from evil ways, not he who is not tranquil, not he who is not concentrated in mind, not even he whose mind is not composed can reach the Self through right knowledge." (*navirato dusc aritan nasanto nasamahitah Nashanta-manaso vapi prajnanenainam apnuyat*).<sup>3</sup> The importance of the ethical life is insisted on in all the systems.

The state of spiritual realization is not contra-ethical; it transcends the ethical. Sankara has put among the four requisites for the study of the Vedanta, the acquisition of moral virtues as one of the factors. The other three are: discrimination of the Real from the unreal; non-attachment to the fruits of earth and heaven; and the desire for release. The scriptures cannot purify the man whose moral life is not pure. Some systems have insisted on a severe form of self-culture as the true preparation for spiritual realization. For example, Buddhism and Jainism appeal to no extraneous inducements or punishments, and to no invocation to God. Referring to Buddhism,

1. I. 2.23.

2. BR IV. 4.21.

3. I. 2.24.



Whitehead observes that it is "the most colossal example in the history of applied metaphysics." The Prabhakara school of Mimamsa has elevated the moral good as an end in itself. The author of the great epic Mahabharata concludes his grand work with this agonizing cry:

I cry with arms uplifted, yet none heedeth. From righteousness flow forth pleasure and profit. Why then do ye not follow Dharma?

Ignorant and ill-informed critics at home and abroad declare that in Indian philosophical systems spiritual realization frees men from moral obligations. This is hardly true, if we take into account the lives and work of the Jivanmuktas (those liberated, while still in the body). Moral life implies a constraint in the unregenerate state of man's life. The agent is conscious of his obligations and fulfils them with difficulty. In the Jivanmuktas there is no strife and tension. In the words of Professor Hiriyanna,

they do not realize virtue but reveal it.

Their words are wisdom, and their work is concentration. It is only in this sense, that their acts are spontaneous, that they are said to be above the ethical sphere. Only in this restricted sense is the remark that Indian philosophy is beyond logic and beyond ethics true. It certainly is not anti-rational or infra-ethical. Its close correlation of the moral and spiritual life has resulted in the unity of philosophy and religion in India.

The Indian philosophical systems insist on the necessity of getting spiritual instruction from a preceptor. All virile spiritual traditions have proclaimed the necessity of the *guru*. It is no formality or evasion of one's responsibility. An illumined teacher teaches a qualified aspirant the methods of realization. He does not broadcast the truth from the housetops. He who wants gold must dig; the rest must be content with straw. The path is as sharp as a razor's edge. The aspirant must have a tranquil mind, utter detachment and a sharp intelligence.

The *sadhanas* outlined in the different systems are identical in many ways. The first stage is the life of morality lived in a



society, discharging all duties and refraining from wrong. The path of ceremonial purity cleanses the mind, without which *moksha* is impossible.

The discharge of moral duties and the leading of a pure life prepares the aspirant's mind for the message from the illumined teacher. Receiving it is *sravana*. Reflection upon it is *manana*. It is the process of convincing oneself, through reflection upon the truth learnt by *sravana*. After *manana*, the aspirant begins to meditate on the truth in an uninterrupted manner till he has a direct experience of the truth. This is called *aparoksha-jnana-upasana* or *nidhidhyasana*; it transforms mediate knowledge into immediate experience.

The Indian philosophical systems subscribe to a few common doctrines which are integral to their thought. They are: the doctrine of Karma and rebirth; the eternal, non-created, pure nature of the Soul; the beginninglessness of the world; and its moral nature.

The doctrine of Karma brings out a faith in the eternal moral order of the universe. The universe is not a blind unconscious force, nor is it a chance world. It is a moral theatre for the art of soul making. We are what we have made ourselves. We suffer for what we have done. We reap what we sow. The fault is not in our stars, but in ourselves. No act is private and nothing is unimportant. Everything works out its destiny. The doctrine of Karma does not imply that actions are uncaused. But they are determined by no external force. Karma is not caprice. It is being determined by one's own action.

The doctrine of Karma and the outlook it has created in the minds of men have been responsible for the manner of Indians' lives. Faith in the law of Karma, in the absolute justice of the rewards and punishments that fall to the lot of men, makes people bear their lot without bitterness and hatred.

Closely connected with the doctrine of Karma is the doctrine of rebirth. One short life is hardly sufficient for man's spiritual development. Many births are spiritually necessary for the growth of man on spiritual lines. The doctrine assures us that the moral values and worth, achieved in one life are not lost for ever. They are carried to other lives. The theory makes for the moral and spiritual continuity of man. Nothing good is lost; no moral effort is without its continued good effects.



Life in this world is regarded by all the systems as a preparation for the realization of *moksha*. "Samsara is a succession of spiritual opportunities," in the words of Dr Radhakrishnan.

To awaken the spiritual in man and help him to realize it, and thus to humanize man, is the supreme objective of all institutions, social and religious. Ill-informed critics are of the opinion that Indian philosophy is ascetic and other-worldly. They declare that it is world-negating, static and life-destroying, that it has no reverence for life. This is an overdrawn and partial picture. Indian philosophy is dynamic, pragmatic and is inspired by spiritual vision. It has taken note of the natural motives, instincts and passions of man and has regulated them. It aims at evolving a civilization which is naturally productive, socially just, aesthetically beautiful and spiritually integral. It is not a country without a capital, nor is it a formless lump of creeds with no central doctrines as nucleus to hold it. It is a citadel with a ring of outworks, intricate but interrelated, and the outworks are being added to from time to time.

#### 4. The Philosophy of Indian Culture

IN THE HISTORY of man's recorded existence on this planet, we have seen the rise and fall of several civilizations. Among them the ancient civilizations of Ur, Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Mexico, Nigeria, Greece, and Rome are prominent.

The history of Indian civilization, however, is unique; for it has had a continuous development for over forty centuries, during which it has faced many changes—social convulsions, political upheavals, repeated attacks from within and without—all of which it has survived. This marvellous continuity points to its strange vitality and sound instinct for life. It has throughout the ages produced representatives to uphold the glory of its ideal. In this sense Indian civilization is neither old nor new; it is *purana* (*pura api nava eva iti puranah*—ancient and yet new); it is eternal, immortal, and deathless (*mrtyunjaya*). L. F. Rushbrook Williams writes in his book *What About India?*:

The first thing to realize about India is that it is the home of an ancient, but still vital civilization which differs greatly from the civilization of the West. The ancient civilization of Egypt exists only for the archaeologist. That of Sumeria must be uncovered by the excavators. But the civilization of India, in its origins probably as ancient as either, still exists in full flower before our eyes, and is the greatest factor in the lives of people who today number three hundred and fifty millions, one-fifth of the entire population of the world.

In his *New Lights on the Most Ancient East*, V. Gordon Childe writes:



India confronts Egypt and Babylonia by the third millennium with a thoroughly individual and independent civilization of her own, technically the peer of the rest.

It has not been purely a static civilization, confined to its home with no mission and message, nor has it been completely other-worldly. Indian culture spread widely. This fact has been vividly described by Sylvain Levi, the great French Orientalist:

From Persia to the Chinese sea, from the icy regions of Siberia to the islands of Java and Borneo, from Oceania to Socotra, India has propagated her beliefs, her tales, and her civilization. She has left indelible imprints on one-fourth of the human race in the course of a long succession of centuries. She has the right to reclaim in universal history the rank that ignorance had refused her for a long time, to hold her place among the great nations, summarizing and symbolizing the spirit of Humanity.

In the cuneiform inscriptions of the fourteenth century B.C. in Mitanni, a city in Asia Minor, we find mention of Vedic deities like Indra, Varuna, Mitra and the Ashvins. There is great affinity between the scriptures of the Persians and the Vedas. Archaeologists point out that Hindu temples have been unearthed at Anuradhapura in Ceylon, at Borobudur in Java, and Angkor in Cambodia. Sir Aurel Stein has traced Indian settlements and caravan routes through the desert of Central Asia up to the great wall of China. Buddhism crossed Indian borders into Tibet, Burma, and the Mongolian countries about the second century B.C. There was constant and uninterrupted cultural relationship between India and China for a period of six hundred years from the time of Kanishka to Harsha. Many of the Buddhist works, of which the originals are lost, survive in Chinese, Japanese, and Tibetan versions.

Indian culture has not only spread in the past but is often looked upon today as the saving culture of our collapsing human civilization. A number of great European and American intellectuals in the last two centuries, obsessed by the plight of humanity that has resulted from scientific materialism, scepticism, positivism, and the anguish of denial, have turned to Ind-



ian culture and are influenced by its philosophy—Vedanta. The philosophy of Indian culture is hailed as a corrective to the ills of our age, and hence its message is topical. It is a failure of perspective to listen only to the voices of the Greek masters, Plato and Aristotle, and of European thinkers like Spinoza, Kant, and Hegel, and not to the sages and seers of India.

Indian culture is essentially spiritual in its objective. The greatest intuition of the spiritual seers of India is the unity of all life and existence in the ultimate Reality, the Brahman or Atman, which is the truth of all existence, its ground and goal, and the core of man's inmost being. The *Svetasvatara Upanishad* speaks of:

*Eko devah sarvabhutesu gudhah sarvavyapi  
sarvabhutantaratma,  
Karmadhyaksah sarvabhutadhipasah saksi ceta kevalo  
nirgunasca.*

The one God, hidden in all beings, all-pervading,  
the Inner Soul of all things,  
The Overseer of deeds, in all things abiding,  
The Witness, the sole Thinker, devoid of attributes.

Attaining Him is the highest good, the uttermost freedom, and the manifest destiny of man. It is the end of man's evolution, the purpose of his life (*Purusat na param kincit sa katha sa paragatih*).<sup>1</sup>

Spiritual realization is a matter of experience and its truth is self-certifying (*svatah-siddha* or *svatah-pramana*).<sup>2</sup> We cannot have it at second hand; for it is intuitive and not intellectually realized. Religion is a matter of direct experience (*svanubhuti*). Creeds, dogmas, scriptures, symbols, and institutions of religion are merely its instruments. The experience of spiritual seers is explained in intellectual terms to us. The different creeds are

1. *Katha Upanishad*, III, ii. See also Sri Aurobindo's article on Indian culture, "A Reply to Archer's Criticism of Indian Culture," in *Advent* (1948).

2. For a summary of the fundamental doctrines of the spiritual religion of India see Aldous Huxley's Introduction to the English translation of the *Bhagavad-Gita* by Christopher Isherwood and Swami Prabhavananda.



several intellectual formulations according to different temperaments, expressed in the psychological idiom of the author and the age. The voice is one; the echoes are many. Spiritual experience is progressive and open to all who make a ceaseless effort. The Spirit being conceived under different names, its ultimate nature is not rigidly defined as in dogmatic religions, but stated in clear, non-dogmatic terms.

The sages of India have therefore declared, "The Real is one, but men call it by many names, imagine it in many ways."<sup>3</sup> Such a broad formulation of the religious ideal has been responsible for the characteristic tolerance and universal acceptance of the Hindu mind. This attitude of tolerance and acceptance is not something artificial but is an article of Hindu faith. It is this attitude that makes for the progressive, scientific, and rational nature of Hinduism and its universalism. The Hindu mind admits of a "graduated scale" of interpretation from the most impersonal to the most personal. It does not condemn in harsh terms the religion of the average man and his conceptions, but leads him on gradually to higher ideals and deepens and vitalizes his faith. The Indian mind is conscious of the complexity of human nature. Men differing in their psychological dispositions and intellectual talents need differing conceptions of the Deity.<sup>4</sup> *Siva Mahimna Stotra* says:

*Rucinam vaicitryat rjukutilananapathajusam,  
Nrnam eko gamyah tvamasi payasamarnava iva*

(As all streams have for their goal the sea, so, O Lord, Thou art the one goal of men who take, by reason of diverse tendencies, various paths, crooked or straight.)

The seers of India did not reduce religious life to an empty single formula in the name of philosophical reason. They purified religion by making it subserve the Spirit. They held the opinion that rites, vows, ceremonies, modes of worship, ways of sacrifice,

3. "Ekam sad vipra bahudha vadanti"; also: "Ekam santam bahudha kalpayanti"; cf. "Ekam jyotir bahudha vibhati"—The one flame shines variously.

4. Cf. Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy*, Ch. VIII, "Religion and Temperament," pp. 168ff.



and various institutions are as instruments helping us in attaining spiritual realization. According to Hindu sages, religion becomes a reality only when it answers to the complete spiritual needs of men, not if it merely satisfies the rational part of man and the intellectuals in a society. Religion must have a hope for all and respond to the needs of the entire man.

Freedom is the supreme law of spiritual life. Not only are "all things that have been rightly said by all prophets" ours, but all roads lead to Rome. Indian culture looks upon other faiths as the fellow-seekers of Truth, and hence is not for aggressive propaganda or conversion. The Hindu is not for active proselytism but for the deepening of others' religion. Hence, we have not had in India the religious wars characteristic of societies with dogmatic theologies.

Broadly, three methods of God-realization are indicated—*Jnana*, the Way of Knowledge; *Bhakti*, the Way of Devotion, and *Karma*, the Way of Works—depending on temperament, but all leading to the same goal. Each individual is given a definite way of life suited to his temperament and abilities (*svadharma*), but all are expected to keep up a general morality which insists on practice of the following virtues: non-killing, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence, and non-acceptance of possessions. The *Yogasutras* of Patanjali lay down these as the paramount great vows (*sarvabhauma-mahavratam*) that are to be practised by all irrespective of time, place, purpose, and caste rules. Besides this, every individual is assigned to a caste which is determined not by his birth but by his qualities and tendencies. He is to observe the laws and duties of his caste. The four-fold caste system was not the rigid and unmeaning thing that it is today, stiffened into a fixed hierarchy without purity and utility, unintended by the originators of this great educational formula. What obtains today is a mere travesty of the original. Many are inclined to describe it as an economic adjustment or a sort of guild system for the maintenance of society. But its intention was to help each individual to develop to the full in his own place by doing his duties with a spiritual attitude. As the *Gita* puts it:

*Yatah pravrttirbhutanam yena sarvavidam tatam,  
Svakarmana tamabhyarcya siddhim vindati manavah.*

(From whom is the evolution of all beings, by whom all this



(universe) is pervaded, worshipping Him with his own duty, a man attains Perfection.)

The ancient Hindu scheme of society is organic, co-ordinating all activity, helping man to realize the Highest, not only for his own good but that of society also. To awaken the spiritual in man and to humanize him are its objectives. Ill-informed critics are of the opinion that Indian culture is ascetic and other-worldly. They hold that Indian culture is world-negating, life-denying, and static. This is a partial picture. The ancient culture of India is not other-worldly. It does say that this life is good if you know enough to understand the purpose of life. It maintains that this life is good, but only as a means to an end. Hindu philosophy is a dynamic, pragmatic, and spiritual power which inspires man to rise higher and enlarge his vision. It has taken note of the natural motives, passions, and instincts of man and regulated them. It aims at evolving a civilization which is "naturally productive, socially just, aesthetically beautiful, and spiritually integral." The arts and architecture, drama and poetry, and institutions and ways of life of the Hindus are all integrated, and their civilization is progressive, rational, and humane. It is a great mistake for some of our youth, particularly the intellectuals, to despair of India and say that she is exhausted. It is a fallacious generalization to judge India from recent history; for it is a very ancient civilization which has a message for all times and is not without one for our age. Lord Acton remarks that "to emphasize the three hundred years' failure of a nation, ignoring its three thousand years' success, is to study history from a wrong perspective." Indian culture is not a country without a capital, nor is it a formless lump of creeds and sects with no central doctrine to hold them. It is a citadel with a ring of outworks, intricate but interrelated. The outworks are being added to and altered from time to time.

## 5. *Logic and Intuition in Indian Philosophy*

INDIAN PHILOSOPHY is not any and every kind of approach to the study of Reality. It is the acceptance of tested knowledge, of beliefs examined in the light of not only the intellect but also the integral experience of man, resulting in an enlightenment which puts an end to sorrows and vouchsafes bliss. From the resulting spiritual experience, man acquires angelic powers, and Godlike apprehension, enabling him to incarnate the spiritual values and to express them in human institutions. This is the supreme goal, according to every system of Indian philosophy, except the Materialist.

Most speculative systems in the West have restricted the significance of the term "Philosophy" to the investigations of a faculty confined to the worlds of sense and of reason. They hold philosophy to be an intellectual interpretation of Reality, critical and non-dogmatic and confined to the methods of science, i.e. perception and inference. Insistence on the primacy of the intellect and complete reliance on it have unduly narrowed the scope of Western philosophy. Its uncritical adherence to critical methods is responsible for the West's distrust of religion and of the systems of philosophy based on intuition and spiritual experience.

Let me illustrate the rational strain in Western thought. Socrates urged the need for concepts and definition and equated virtue with knowledge. Plato admitted none to his academy who had not had an efficient course in Geometry and numbers. Aristotle defined man, not as a spiritual being, but as a rational animal. The philosophy of the middle ages is one long development of Christian dogma.



It is the preoccupation of European philosophers with reason, and their anxiety for emancipation from religion and theology that have led them to Logical Positivism. That emancipation was no liberation; Western philosophy now clings to the coat-tails of science, instead of to the apron-strings of theology. The new slavery is to science and semantics. Logical Positivists in their enthusiasm for scientific methods have distrusted the value of all speculation, regard all propositions and problems of the traditional systems of constructive metaphysics as either tautologous or nonsensical.

Analysis, we are told, is the chief method of this school. The importance assigned to semantics has given rise to a rich linguistic technique resulting in the dreadful paucity of philosophical material. Propositions are analyzed into the analytic and the negative, the empirical and the logical. Such an analysis excludes value-judgements; it does not commit us to metaphysical views or even meaningful ideas. Logical Positivism has destroyed the *absolutes* of religion, science and art and its attack on the eternal nature of values has received wide-spread approval. Logical Positivism is philosophical black-marketeering.

If we leave this restricted function of philosophy and grow ambitious to probe deep into metaphysical problems, we are told that we shall be up against Language, Logic and Truth. The West's adherence to the exclusive claims of reason has limited the scope of its philosophy in general, though on the other hand we have the romantic movement in philosophy which completely breaks away from reason and elevates instinct.

India has interpreted the term "Philosophy" in its plenary and integral sense, not stressing the logical to the exclusion of the intuitive. Ultimate Reality cannot be completely comprehended either by perception or by inference. Reality is not confined to the worlds of sense and reason. Ultimate philosophical category is not the result of logical construction on the basis of common experience; nor is it deduced from certain assumptions. It is posited first on the authority of *sruti* (revelation), it is validated by individual spiritual experience.

The Indian philosopher's insistence on the authority of revelation and his conviction that spiritual intuition alone can give us certain and immediate experience of Reality have helped him to a full interpretation of the term philosophy. It is no longer



anaemic, abstract and academic. It is an enlightened and full-blooded spiritual life with a humanist ethic. The position of the Indian Philosopher is criticized by some as unphilosophical. Indian philosophy, they say, is a contradiction in terms. It is based on a farrago of scriptural declaration and verified by subjective visions called spiritual illumination but having no objective basis. This unfair charge proceeds from ill-informed and unsympathetic critics.

The student of Indian Philosophy knows the limitations and the dangers arising from an exclusive adherence to reason. To him the purpose of philosophy is not the mere satisfaction of theoretic curiosity, not mere subtle metaphysics, but soul-saving knowledge. It is not merely perspicacity but transfigured life. It is not a search for Truth for Truth's sake, but a life-transforming experience. Contrast this with F. H. Bradley's definition:

Philosophy seeks to gain possession of Reality, but only in an *ideal form*.

J. S. Mackenzie adds that the mission of the philosopher:

terminates in the quest rather than in any actions that follow it.

Reason and perception can explain objects of knowledge with the help of the network of relations. All knowledge works under the subject-object relation, but Reality is not an object of knowledge, it is an immediate ineffable experience which does not admit of divisions. Relational knowledge cannot give experience of the immediate and indivisible nature of Reality. Sense perception and inference, being forms of mediate knowledge, cannot give us absolute certainty; hence we need to transcend reason.

Reasoning can only test truth; it can never establish it conclusively. The validity of reason itself rests on something that cannot be reasoned. If it rests on some other reason, we shall have to go on from one truth to another, which ultimately lands us in infinite regress. Even the so-called tests of truth, such as Non-contradiction and Coherence, are not obtained through reasoning but are presuppositions. There is another difficulty: the more efficient reasoner upsets the conclusions of the less efficient.



The final truth cannot rest on such a relative test. The author of the *Vedanta Sutra* holds that logic is inconclusive. The Real is not provable; it is Self-evident; and it is its own proof.

The Indian philosopher does not distrust reason. He knows its uses but also its limitations, and insists that it be confined in its range. Perception and inference have their relative realms. The scriptures give us knowledge of objects that cannot be known by perception and inference.

Indian thought recognizes, therefore, the need for intuition. Intuition is not a way of feeling; it is not instinct or supernatural guidance. It is an integral experience. Schelling calls it "transcendental thought." "The glow of intuition," in the words of Bergson:

carries us to the roots of our being, to the principle of life in general.

In another place he calls it the privilege of mystics. Indian philosophy reconciles the claims of logic and intuition. As Dr S. Radhakrishnan puts it:

. . . wisdom sure and transcendent is different from scientific knowledge though it is not discontinuous with it.

The death of the intellect is not the condition of the spirit; on the contrary, all the systems of philosophy insist on *vijnana*, intellectual effort to get rid of ignorance (*avidya*). Philosophy is not for the intellectually indolent. *Vicara* and *viveka* are indispensable; *manana* or reflective thinking is absolutely necessary. The student becomes convinced of the truth. Others might teach us the truth which they have reached, as well as the method by which they attained it. It is our experience which is the final test that makes Indian Philosophy scientific and empirical in its outlook.

The student of philosophy must not merely have "a sharp intellect," the mind must also be purged of all passions. Passion and prejudices are great obstacles to clarity of vision. Philosophy is not for the ignorant, nor the distracted, nor for one who is not pure.

Accepting the authority of revelation looks merely unphiloso-

phical on the face of it, but even purportful scriptural statements require intelligent interpretation; the criteria are laid down, the application of reason is important. Professor M. Hiriyanna, with significant insight, points out that the Mīmamsakas who believed in the eternity of the particular order of words in the Vedic texts do not stand for the "idolatry of the scriptures" but only declare that the Vedas embody the eternal verities. He has for his authority Patanjali's statement:

Is it not said that the Vedas were not composed—but are eternal? Quite so: but *it is their sense* that is so, not the order of the syllables in them.

Thus reason and revelation, intuition and intellect, life and thought are integrated in Indian Philosophy, hence its vitality and its perennial value, not only for India but for the world.



## 6. *The Relation Between Matter and Mind : The Hindu View*

ALMOST ALL the systems of philosophy in East and West have in some form or other faced the time-honoured problem of the relation between Mind and Matter; on the nature of their solution depended their philosophical labels. In India the different philosophical systems, significantly called Darsanas, originated under the pressure of practical needs, arising from the presence of moral and physical evils in life. Aware of the imperfections of life, their formulators sought to attain a state free from pain and finitude. They are not merely views of life, but also ways of life.

This is the distinguishing feature of Indian philosophical thought, as becomes clear when we contrast it with the prime motive of most philosophical systems of the West. To Western thinkers philosophical systems are exercises of the intellectual faculty. They do not want to taint the pursuit of Truth with theological, ethical and religious considerations; they want to pursue Truth for its own sake. J. S. Mackenzie observes that the mission of philosophy terminates in the quest rather than any actions that may follow it.

Indian philosophical systems did not believe in Truth for Truth's sake, or art for art's sake. Everything was for the sake of the termination of misery and the realization of spiritual experience. This pragmatic outlook in the plenary sense of the term was the motive force of all the Indian systems. Every problem was seen against this background.

The realization aimed at by all the Indian systems was in



some form or other the true nature of one's own self. This is overlaid by factors and materials that do not belong to it. Hence, the confusion in *samsara*. The Not-Self is not clearly distinguished from the Self. That is why the Self feels all the misery. The different systems of Indian philosophy represent different stages in the solution of the relation between the Not-Self and the Self. The same is expressed in metaphysical language as the problem of the relation between Mind and Matter, and in psychological language as the relation between Body and Mind.

The common-sense view accepts the dualism between the Not-Self, i.e., Matter, or the external world of objects, and Self, or the Spirit of man. This dualism is man's first reflective finding. The *Nyaya*, the *Vaisesika*, the *Sankhya*, the *Yoga* and the *Mimamsa* systems and the theistic schools of *Vedanta*, of Ramanuja, and of Madhva, hold the view that the Not-Self or Matter or the external inert world is in sharp contrast to the Self. They posit the eternality and beginninglessness for both the Self and the Not-Self. Theistic systems have erected a supra-personal God as the director of both Matter and Mind, which are described as dependent substances. The *Nyaya* school held such a view. But it did not posit, like Descartes, a moment-to-moment interference of God for securing the interaction of body and mind.

The realistic systems of Indian philosophy have posited an interaction between Matter and Mind as natural. This they were able to do because they endowed Mind with the capacity to use Matter for furthering its interest. The dualism between Matter and Mind was not rigid. One was subordinate to the other, though not created by the other. Both are uncreated, but one, i.e., Matter, has the capacity to serve the Mind as its instrument. Both the categories (*tattvas*) *cit* and *acit* (Mind and Matter) are dependent on *Isvara*. The dualistic and theistic systems bridge the gulf between Mind and Matter, by making Matter the supreme instrument and medium for the religious life and service to humanity.

Other systems, like the *Sankhya*, the *Vaisesika* and the *Mimamsa*, do not abolish dualism, but exhort the individual to mark off the Self from the Not-Self and not to be beguiled by the blandishments of Nature. The *Sankhya* Purusha realizes that he has nothing in common with the workings of *Prakriti*, and



that he is purely a witness. All that he witnesses is external to him and belongs to Matter, which he is not. Such a realization ends misery and grief.

The Sankhya dualism of Spirit and Matter may not appear a very profound solution to the upholders of philosophic unity like Sankara. Nonetheless its dualism has certain merits which are absent from Western concepts.

To the Sankhya, *Prakrti* or Matter is a continuous and unitary entity. Its evolution affords experience and finally release to the Purusha. Interaction between Matter and Purusha is impossible here, but still the system posits the presence of the Purusha as indispensable to the evolution of *Prakrti*. It also makes a bold attempt to explain the interaction of Purusha and *Prakrti* without contact, with the help of examples from nature. These examples are not satisfactory, but still they are not without speculative interest. In Sankhya we have the boldest attempt to retain dualism, along with atheism, and, above all, to explain a contactless interaction between Mind and Matter on a naturalistic basis. The most impressive attempt is made here to combine a scientific explanation with a dualistic metaphysics.

But a complete and thorough solution of the problem is given by Sankara and the Advaita thinkers who preceded and succeeded him. They considered dualism of Matter and Mind as a theory only of the first glance and not the product of considered philosophical thought. It is a philosophical half-way house and not a completed journey.

In this history of philosophic thought the distinction between subject and object had come to stay as a permanent feature. Some thinkers of East and West have retained the dualism and declared that the subject cannot be explained intelligibly in terms of the object. They have also held that the objective world of matter cannot in any way taint the subject. In their anxiety to secure the purity of the Self, they left the dualism as insurmountable, though of course they did assert the superiority of the Self over the Not-Self. Some solipsistic Advaita thinkers, in their flair for logical consistency, denied the reality of the objective world and reduced it to an illusion and thus did not accept dualism at all. Such an attempt amounts to explaining away the problem, not explaining it.

Sankara took his stand on the apparent dualism of Mind and



Matter, subject and object, but he never accepted this distinction as insurmountable. By his authentic religious experience and on the strength of the testimony of other seers, with a powerful and convincing dialectic, he points to a state of consciousness which is beyond the subject-object distinction, and the Matter and Mind dualism. In that state of consciousness or experience the distinctions do not stand out but are synthesized. The fundamental intuition at which Descartes arrived, after the searching application of the principle of doubt—*Cogito, ergo sum* (I think, therefore I exist)—is not for Sankara completely satisfactory. Descartes identifies the Self with only one aspect of experience, i.e. the experienter. Thinking is existence for him. But Sankara identifies the Self not with one aspect or other of experience but with experience as a whole. The subject-object distinctions arise when the experience is lived through. The distinctions are *in* it and are not *of* it.

If such a position is not accepted we cannot in any logical manner transcend the dualism between Matter and Mind, or between the Self and the Not-Self. The Self can know the external world because there is some kind of unity between the Self and that world. As Professor S. Radhakrishnan observes, "Reality and existence are not to be set against each other as metaphysical contraries." The monistic vision of the Upanishadic seers of India has been a progressive analysis of experience in the light of the supreme spiritual experience.

In the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, there is the illuminating dialogue between the sage Varuna and his son Bhrigu. Bhrigu, after great intellectual effort, wants to know the Supreme. Varuna tells him that Brahman "is that from whence these beings are born, that by which when born they live, and that into which they enter at their death. Try to know that. This is Brahman." Bhrigu progressively identifies Brahman with matter (*annam*), life (*prana*), mind (*mana*), self-consciousness (*vijnana*), and lastly understands it as *ananda*, i.e., bliss.

The fact that everything that is, is an aspect of Brahman is not an intellectual construction for the Hindu mind but an intuitive realization. Till the moment of that realization the distinction serves the purpose of the Spirit. The distinction is not unreal or illusory, nor has it an independent reality of its own. It is used by the Spirit for its progress. The external world,



Matter (*annam*), is the food of the Spirit. The world of Matter is transformed by the spiritual experience of man. The Upanishadic statement *sarvam khalvidam Brahma* (All this is Brahman) is the true monistic vision which reconciles the dualism.

Prior to this experience, the dualism is real. Its relative reality is not denied. But the sharp distinction between the two is surmounted by positing the unity of purpose and making Matter or body or the external world an instrument for the Soul in its pilgrimage to perfection. The world is not so much denied as used up. Viewed from this angle, the sharp distinction between Matter and Mind vanishes and their interaction becomes intelligible. Indian philosophical systems begin with the view that Nature is external to man and pass on to the view that Nature or the external world is dominated by Spirit. If that domination is possible, Nature cannot be alien to Spirit. It must be of the nature of Spirit and identical with it. It is this truth that makes us no banished strangers in this universe but akin to the Spirit. This is the basis of the charter of Advaita Vedanta: "That thou art" (*Tat tvam asi*).

## 7. The Four Values in Hindu Thought<sup>1</sup>

CONTEMPORARY EUROPEAN thought has chiefly concentrated its attention on the study of the metaphysical status and import of the three traditional values: Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. A large number of scientific-minded Humanist philosophers of the West have affirmed their faith in values. They have asserted the objective and intrinsic nature of values. Against such philosophic background it is worthwhile to examine the Indian conception of values.

Values are to be contrasted with the study of facts. Scientific observation acquaints us with facts. "The study of values involves judgment. Value is a judgment that a thing is desirable (*ista*) for the well-being of man. That which acts as a means in securing the desirable end is called an instrumental value (*ista-sadhanata*)." An apparent study of human wants gives us the impression that the number of instrumental values we pursue is legion. But close scrutiny shows that most of the desired and desirable things of this earth are finite, and perishable. The stamp of mortality is deeply set on them. They yield pleasure only for the time being. Such of those instruments that secure the transient and fleeting pleasures of life are instrumental values, as contrasted with ultimate and intrinsic values. Ultimate values are ends in themselves and not means to any other end. Hence, Truth, Beauty, and Goodness are asserted as intrinsic values.

Hindu Philosophical thought has proclaimed that there are four different human values: (1) *Dharma*=the Duty, (2) *Artha*=

---

1. The term *Purusartha* means human values. They are four in number: *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha*.



Wealth, (3) *Kama*=Desire, and (4) *Moksha*=Salvation. Not all of them are accepted as ultimate values. By most of the systems of Indian Philosophy *Artha* and *Kama* are relegated to the level of instrumental values. They are not *Parama-Purusarthas* (ultimate values). *Moksha* and *Dharma* have been classified as ultimate and intrinsic values. Though there is a great deal of difference in the descriptions of *Moksha* given by the different schools of philosophy, still there is a substantial measure of agreement as to the non-return of the liberated to the spatio-temporal world of *Samsara*. Peace, bliss and non-return to the world of *Samsara* are the characteristics of the liberated soul.

*Artha* and *Kama* (wealth and desire) are not discarded and despised by the Hindu ethicist: they have a right and limited jurisdiction in the building up of the human personality: they fulfil their functions only when they subserve the end, *Moksha*. Wealth, valour and power are in themselves neutral. Their moral nature is determined by the use to which they are put. To merit the name instrumental values, *Artha* and *Kama* must subserve the end *Moksha* in accordance with the behests of *Dharma*. The spiritual aspirant in order to attain *Moksha* need not effect a violent rupture with ordinary life. Ancient Indian culture never stood for the complete denial of the enjoyment of the goods of life. There has always been an insistence on a degree of freedom from sordidness and indigence of a grinding type.

The two-fold ideas advocated by Hinduism—the way of active life (*pravritti*) and the path of renunciation (*nivritti*)—have assumed an entirely new significance at the hands of the author of the Gita. The Gita idea of these two paths is an advance on the Varnasrama view of it. The Varnasrama view treated the life of activity (*pravritti*) as purely utilitarian. The good that accrued from the treading of the activity-path was useful to society as well as to the individual. The path of renunciation (*nivritti*) was conceived as involving the cessation of all activities (*sarva Karma Samnyasa*). The Gita idea of morality cuts fresh ground. The Gita insists on a life of activity with the spirit of perfect detachment from the things of the world and attachment to God. It is against the view of the cessation of all activities. It does not stand for Karma Samnyasa, but it stands for the renunciation of the fruits of the activity (*phalasamnyasa*). The utilitarian taint attached to the life of *pravritti* is transformed by the spirit of the



renunciation of the fruits of the activity. The detachment taught by the Gita is not stoicism, because it involves attachment to God.<sup>2</sup>

Passing on to consider the value *Dharma*, this is a most difficult Sanskrit-term to render into English. We can take the Good as a fair equivalent of it. A liberal interpretation of the term *Dharma* means "that which sustains society in perfect and just equilibrium." The securing of an atmosphere where everyone can grow to the best of his nature is the effect of the presence of the value *Dharma*. It gives coherence and direction to the different activities of life. Some have interpreted the term '*Dharma*' (the *Nyaya* School) to mean 'moral merit' accruing from the performance of scripture-ordained duties. It is the substance of social as well as individual morality. It entails the cultivation of virtues like fortitude, temperance and self-restraint. Further the social aspect enjoins the performance of duties to others in accordance to the laws. On this view the performance of *Dharma* turns out at best to be instrumental (*ista-sadhana*) towards the attainment of either heavenly bliss (*svarga*) or the enjoyment of fruits of this world.

One of the two prominent branches of the schools of Mimamsa, the Prabhakara school, holds the view that *Dharma* is an ultimate value. It is posited as an end in itself and not a means to any other End. This is the Indian version of the German philosopher Kant's moral theory. Kant held that the dictates of Practical Reason are to be treated as categorical imperatives. His dictum was "duty for duty's sake." Prabhakara insists the performance of *Dharma* for *Dharma's* sake. Such a formalistic ethical theory has been criticized on one and the same ground in the East as well as the West. Such a theory hardly has a content for morality and has been described as a drill sergeant's theory of morality. It is extremely formal and as such difficult to apply to life. Such a theory in the words of Sankara reduces all activities to a form of meaningless drudgery.

The Vedanta like most other schools treats *Moksha*, i.e. spiritual realization as the only ultimate value and the other three

---

2. The Two-fold View of Life: By Prof. M. Hiriyanna; Presidential address to the Philosophy section of the Eighth Oriental Conference, Mysore.



are regarded as instrumental to it. *Dharma* is considered an instrumental value in a specific sense. It is instrumental not in securing the objects desired by our deluded self, born out of attachment (*raga*) and hatred (*dvesa*). It is instrumental in securing *Moksha* from which state there is no return to the world of sorrow and rebirth. The desire for *Moksha* is born out of *Jnana* and not delusion. *Dharma* is not instrumental to the realization of secular ends, but it is used here to achieve the supreme spiritual ideal.

Professor M. Hiriyanna in his address to the Bhandarkar Oriental Institute, Poona has pointed out that Indian Philosophy is essentially a philosophy of values.<sup>3</sup> If the term value means being ultimate and intrinsic, the Indian conception that *Moksha* is the only value is hardly refutable. As with the Indian theists or after the manner of Christianity the three traditional values have to be concretized in the personality of a Deity. Without such a concretization, the ontological status of the values, however cleverly bolstered up by the Realist epistemologies, does not commend itself to our acceptance. Realizing the barrenness of abstract dialectics, Indian Philosophy proclaimed *Moksha* as the only supreme value. *Moksha* is a realization and not a mere understanding. It is an immediate awareness of the universal in us. "Indian Philosophy does not stop at the discovery of truth, but utilizes it for attaining something else which it holds as the supreme value." The supreme object of philosophy (according to all schools) is to help man out of misery and restlessness and bestow the enjoyment of unalloyed bliss. This can never happen if Truth is to be treated as the ultimate value and not as instrumental towards the spiritual realization. Truth for Truth's sake, art for art's sake, are dogmas unacceptable to the Hindu view. All are useful for the realization of the *Atman*. "Even the little and short-lived desires that we have for the things of this world are due to our love of the *Atman*." Philosophy is not a mere game of speculation to the Hindu mind. It is a serious attempt to find the ways and means to escape from the trammels of *samsara* and get at spiritual realization.

The third of the traditional values of the West 'Beauty' has

---

3. Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Vol. XIX, Part I, 1938, pp. 1-22.

attracted the Hindu mind, and there is some difference of opinion about it among the ancient thinkers. The puritans have not disguised their distrust of Beauty and its expression in several arts. Manu the ancient Law Giver reckons in his list of weaknesses (*vyasanās*) song, dance and instrumental music. There was this view that all forms of aesthetic pleasures were disguises of sensual pleasure; hence Beauty was not accepted even as an instrumental value.

Side by side with this view there was the view that art and beauty were intrinsically valid and objective experiences. Kalidasa in his *Malavikāgnimitra* makes the dancing Master say that "the high esteem in which he holds his art is on account of its intrinsic merit, not because he professes it." Some others hold the view that art leads to the experiencing of aesthetic ecstasy (*rasanubhava*) which they say is akin to Brahman realization (with this difference that the artist returns to the world of facts after he lapses from the aesthetic experience and the *mukta* knows no return to the world of *Samsara*).

Taking these different views, the verdict of Indian thought is largely in favour of the tendency to treat beauty and art as instrumental values. There is no denial of the fact that beauty has an irresistible, universal appeal. *Rasa* realization is a step on the onward march to Brahman realization. According to the Indian view all the three values are subsidiary to one and the final end *Moksha*.



## 8. The Hindu Concept of Artha (Wealth)

HUMAN LIFE is viewed and looked upon by Hindu thinkers and sages, as the training ground (*sadhana kshetra*) for man to unfold his potentialities and integrate them into a pattern. The human being is a blend of the divine and diabolic, he is dust and divinity combined. He has to put himself to a training, so as to hold back the cussedness and lust in him and grow the divine element in him. Hinduism has proclaimed a scheme of four-fold values (aspirations) as governing the growth of human life. Human life has to be lived according to plan and not left to itself to shape as it grows. The four-fold values can be classified under two heads, the first two values *artha* and *kama* are the basis of human existence. They are possessions and passions. The life of man consists in his desires. A man is described by the Upanishads as a collection of desires. As is his desire, so is his nature. To fulfil the desires, man has to earn and gather material aid i.e., wealth. All such material aids go under the name of *artha*. It is an instrumental value. It should not be pursued as an end in itself. Man is not merely an economic being for he has other aspects characterizing his life. The pursuit of wealth becomes a value (*purushartha*) only when it does not contravene the canons of social justice and morality (*dharma*). Otherwise, it becomes a *disvalue* and stands condemned. Both passions (*kama*) and possessions (*artha*) have to be regulated by *dharma*. The term *artha* comprises the whole range of tangible objects, that can be possessed, enjoyed, shared and lost, and which we daily require for the upkeep of our life and family.

*Artha* is absolutely necessary for man's life. It is the source and sustenance of all virtues not to speak of the mere gratifica-



tion of desires. Without wealth virtues become impracticable. Poverty is never glorified as a virtue. At the beginning of all our spiritual ceremonies, we resolve (*sankalpa*) that it is performed for securing all the four values. Wealth is not neglected. The common sense poet Bhartihari sings the praise and functions of wealth in ten verses. He points out to us how it is necessary, for all men to enable them to live a dignified life. It is wealth and money alone that enable us to live a life of independence without appeal to others for our livelihood. One is asked to adventure forth on the high seas for securing fortune. If a man cannot support himself and his family on the material plane, how could he work for *moksha* which is very difficult. Even those who talk of (*samnyasa*) renunciation, must acquire something to give it up. They cannot renounce nothing, and *samnyasa* is not a mockery. The Hindu ethicists have insisted on the necessity of man to earn his livelihood by the sweat of his brow while he is fit, strong and young. For achieving anything substantial in human life, one must be free from indigence and misery and enjoy a certain degree of economic competence. He must seek as far as possible to be self-sufficient.

The poet Nilakanta Dikshit writes that "*Dharma* is earned by *artha* and by *dharma artha* is earned. The one is the means and support of the other. *Artha* is the source of the whole world. The loss of wealth spells ruin. *Moksha* cannot be attained by poverty."

Arjuna in the Mahabharata holds the view that *dharma* and *kama* are limbs of *artha*. In the Ramayana, Lakshmana eloquently praises the function and the worth of wealth. He says: "From wealth amassed and increased all activities proceed as rivers from the mountains. To the person of little power and energy bereft of wealth, all actions are extinct, like rivulets in summer. If a person abandons wealth, he, seeking happiness begins to commit sin and wrong and leads a sinful life with increased longing for enjoyment. To the wealthy exist friends and relations. He who has wealth is regarded as a man of importance by people. He is considered as a learned man. He is lucky and he is intelligent. . . . To the man of wealth *dharma* and *kama* and all else are helpful. The man of poverty desirous of wealth and seeking it finds it difficult to get."<sup>1</sup>

1. *Ramayana* VI-83-32-38.



The importance of wealth and its positive role as a contributory force for the development of man is affirmed by the Hindu thinkers. Money is the one indispensable means for the formation and growth of society, for the promotion and cultivation of commerce, industry, scientific research and discovery. For the destruction of evil forces money is necessary. To the Hindus, an affluent society is not necessarily unspiritual. Poverty, famine and pestilence were regarded as the divine visitations resulting from the lack of integrity of rulers and the impurity in administration. In the past, the opulence of India fired the cupidity of many foreigners who overran us. The Hindu sages were not unaware of the potentialities of money. They were keen that it should be utilized with a control and a perfect knowledge of its functions. Sri Aurobindo observes: "one of the three forces, *power, wealth and sex* are the strongest attractions for human ego and they are most generally misheld and misused by those who retain them. The seekers or keepers of wealth are more often possessed rather than its possessors; few escape entirely the distorting influence stamped on it by its long seizure."

It is not the possession that is the evil but the bad use to which it is put to. Vidura states in the Mahabharata, "there are some people who have the conceit of learning, others have conceit of wealth, yet others have the conceit that they are born in renowned family. Learning, wealth and good birth are sources of conceit (*mada*) to those who lack self-control. To the disciplined they are the very sources for the exercise of self-control (*dama*)."

*Vidya mado dhana mado abhijata madastatha  
mada ime avaliptanam ta eva mahatam damaha.*<sup>2</sup>

Property is upheld as a necessary institution by the Hindu, but the holder of it is asked to use it for just purposes and hold it as its trustee. The Hindu concept comes very near the Gandhi trustship theory of property. It is not given to men to indulge in all their desires and seek gratification in all the ways. Kalidasa in his saga of the Raghu rulers exemplifies the ideals to which instrumental values like wealth and power must be used.

---

2. *Viduraniti* V. 45.



The Raghu kings "acquired wealth for giving away, spoke sparingly in order to be truthful, they were desirous of conquest for fame and they entered upon married life for progeny."<sup>3</sup> We should not have an ascetic loathing for money and be afraid of it. We must use it wisely. Manu requires us to give a part of our money in charity, and keep a part for the rainy day and spend the rest for himself, his family and dependents. In short "all wealth belongs to the Divine and those who hold it are its trustees, not possessors. It is with them today; tomorrow it may be elsewhere. All depends on the way they discharge their trust while it is with them; in what spirit, with what consciousness in their use of it, and to what purpose."

Hindu spirituality does not put a ban on money, it seeks to conquer it for the divine and moral use of men. To neglect it would be to strengthen the enemy who will use money for the increase of evil. We should not treasure all wealth, but must use it for social purposes. One has to be entirely selfless, scrupulous and exact and careful in the use of money. Purity in matters of *money* is a great virtue (*artha suddhi*).

Self protection is to be always kept in view. Surely the self has always to be protected. Wealth is one of the great protectors.

The uninformed critic describes the Hindus as a nation of anchorites, all of them ready to die and reserve a berth in heaven. Nothing is farther from truth than this fallacy. There is little authority in Hindu thought to support the criticism. They never despised vital aims, social satisfactions and obligations. They conceded absolute reality to life and its needs and did not neglect its demands and duties. They had a social conscience. Kautilya in his *Artha Shastra* states: that it is a criminal offence liable to punishment by fine or imprisonment for a man to turn an anchorite or take *samnyasa* without making adequate provision for his family and dependents. He has to take a no-due slip from the town or village magistrate.

The Hindu Nation's love of beauty and its secular genius are seen in many of its inventions: e.g., the number *zero*, the *art of drama, dance, music, sculpture and architecture*. They have developed many of the fine arts to great heights and are acclaimed as its exemplars.

---

3. *Raghuvansha* I-7.



The Taittiriya Upanishad records the prayer of the aspirant for money, grains, cattle, children and a life of hundred years. The Hindu mind never neglected the economic values, but they saw that it was not abused. A mild, non-violent type of socialism is advocated in the *Bhagavata Purana*. It states—"Living beings have a right only upto what is necessary for satisfying their hunger, he who feels like acquiring more is a thief and deserves punishment."<sup>4</sup> The Hindu outlook did not stand for an *acquisitive society* nor for an *affluent society* without any state control. It stood for a *dharmic* society. It allowed men to make as much wealth as possible without contravening the principles of *dharma*. The Hindu mind was not doctrinaire in its approach, and so it did not believe in the doctrine of Absolute equality. It believed that each should grow to his best in the manner suited to his grain and *svabhava*. They knew the true implications of the doctrine of equality. They proclaimed an optimum ideal for mankind which is summed up in *Gita* phrase—*Sarva Bhuta Hite Rataha*, the good of all sarvodaya of Gandhiji. The Hindu never declared that "all men are equal" (*Sarve Janaha Samano Bhavantu*), but that all men must be happy (*Sarve Janaha Sukhino Bhavantu*). Their view of social organization is democracy. But it is not the democracy where what the majority think is the law. It does not believe in the cult of numbers, which in the words of Matthew Arnold gives us a new type of barbarism. It is a type of democracy which is described by Gerald Heard as "Organic." "It is the rule of a people who have organized themselves in a living and not a mechanical relationship, where, instead of all men being said to be equal, which is a lie, men are known to be of an *equal value* could they but find the position in which their potential contributions could be realized."<sup>5</sup> Manu rejects the different views that *dharma* alone or that *dharma* and wealth, or that wealth and enjoyment are the most important values.<sup>6</sup> He holds that all three harmoniously cultivated, jointly constitute the three-fold end of human life. This represents the most essential current of Hindu social philosophy and ethics.

---

4. *Bhagavata* VII—14-8.

5. Gerald Heard. *Man The Master*, p. 129.

6. II—224.



## 9. The Concept of Kama

THE SECOND fundamental aspiration or value envisaged by Hindu Ethics is *Kama*. It is wrong to translate it as the desire for sex only. It is the desire of all things in general. The desire for *Moksha* is excluded from this term, as that desire is accorded the status of a separate supreme value. *Kama* is the cluster of desires a man cherishes. Psychologically speaking, a man is nothing more than the complex of his thoughts and the longings of his heart. The longings of the heart is described as *Kama*. For the gratification of our desires, we need the wherewithal which *artha* supplies. According to Hinduism, all the desires of the heart are not to be approved. They need to be regulated and co-ordinated into a perfect integral whole. No one desire is to be elected into an end and pursued exclusively. The desires of the heart are all not of equal ethical value. There is the need to keep some of them under control and others have to be carefully indulged in, and not recklessly enjoyed. Hence, the necessity for self-control. Self-control is essential. All duties have self-control for their end (*sarva dharmah manonigraha laksanantah*). Self-control is nothing more than object oriented life. It is liberation from the dead, dull, mechanical impulsion of our desires. It is the assertion of the freedom of man to stand above the swarm of emotion, sway of impulses, pressure of the opinion of others and temptations of a sensate life governed merely by the pleasure of the moment ignoring the concept of an enduring happiness. Self-control can save men from sinking back to the level of animals. It rescues man from mean motives, humiliating weaknesses, jealous attitudes and cussedness. No virtue is possible without self-control. Self-control implies physical and moral



courage, which entails the necessity and strength to withstand with fortitude the loss of physical pleasure and the gifts of men, and popularity. The Upanishads in the East and Plato in the West have given a moving picture describing the necessity for self-control. The *Katha* declares: "Know thou that self is the master of the chariot, and that, the body is the chariot: Know thou that the intellect is the charioteer, and that the mind is the reins. The senses are the horses, and the objects of the senses are paths for them. The true and real enjoyer in the opinion of the wise is one who lives in the harmony of the senses, body and mind. He who has no understanding and whose mind is unrestrained—his senses unmanageable are like unruly horses of a charioteer." "But he who has understood and whose mind is restrained—his senses are under his control are like the good horses of a charioteer." The power of standing against the sway of pleasant feelings and running with the senses alone can save us from physical disaster and economic ruin. Self-control alone gives us a governable mind and steadfast wisdom. Without it, our will becomes irresolute and we infirm of purpose. Hence its importance in the art of life. The Gita persistently preaches it. An undistracted mind with a singleness of purpose is the precise requirement of man.

*Kama* or desire by itself is not bad. It has to be hedged in by the behests of *dharma*. Our desires are gales and they carry us away if we abandon effort. They do not get subdued automatically without effort. It is foolishness to hope that somehow we can overcome temptations and lusts and do nothing about it. The only way evil grows in this world is by our refusing to do anything to eradicate it. Self-control does not come all at once. It involves good deal of pain to cut ourselves from pleasant sense activities. The eternal predicament of man is to make the choice between the pleasant and the good, between inclination and duty in Kant's language, between life eternal and death in the words of Christ. The impulses, the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh and other human traits give us battle in different forms. They take on numerous guises. They go underground only to re-emerge in a different form. There is no use in repressing them, for they visit us through surprising outlets. Some foolishly imagine they can be quelled by complete gratification. Oscar Wilde's statement, the best way of overcoming a tempta-



tion is yielding to it is nothing more than a smart saying. Manu points out "that our desires are never quelled by enjoyment or gratification of them. They grow like the flames fed by butter or ghee." Marcus Aurelius writes—"The desires of the senses draw us hither and thither but when the hour is past, what do they bring us but remorse of conscience and dissipation of the spirit." Mere rational speculation is not a powerful enough deterrent. Any moment, man's composedness can fly to the winds leaving him entirely to the mercy of the overwhelming passions. It requires not only a stoic mind but God's grace to withstand the constant, persistent pressure of temptation set before man. Self-control and earnest prayer, according to Gita, alone are of avail against the lure of senses which are there to inveigle frail mortals like us.

The life of impulses and passions are strong. They blur the vision of man and confuse his understanding. *Kama*, as an aspiration of man, manifests itself in sex. This impulse, Hinduism says, must be kept under check. The entire epic Ramayana is an illustration of the two types, one who is lured by sex into doing anything and the other the hero, who keeps it under perfect control. Men in their quest for the sensational life and false happiness spare no efforts and they count that opposing dangers, suffering and losses as nothing. The pre-occupation with sex distorts all values and makes men impulsive fools. They go quite mad in its pursuit. Sex is the fire in the blood of man and it burns up the whole personality in him. Some schools of psychology boost sex and advertise it a thousand fold and give it an academic backing. Hinduism does not countenance the starvation of our vital impulses. We are asked to regulate them in such a manner as not to endanger society or one's mental health. We are not to thwart our impulses but train them, not hush them but harness them to noble ends. We are not asked to deny ourselves the normal pleasures of life. It exhorts us not to make them ends in themselves or overemphasize the importance and value of any one aspiration. Moderation is the doctrine of the Hindu. The Gita advises us not to take to extremes. "You cannot have a composed life, if you eat too much or too little: nor he who sleeps too much or keeps awake too long will be happy." One must be temperate in his food and recreation, regulated in his sleep and vigils.

The one law that should govern the indulgence of desires is



that it should not contravene the good of society and *Dharma* (righteousness). Lord Krishna in the Gita states "he is that desire which is not opposed to *Dharma*." Every worldly ambition, every form of gratification of senses has to be realized in proper balance, without being over valued and without being treated as an end. The pleasures of life when treated as ends in themselves, turn out to be the expressions of egoism resulting in conflict and tragedy. They poison the very texture of life. The pleasures and the experiences of life are opportunities for the growth of the spiritual and permanent side of our nature. If we abuse them they impede the growth and arrest development.

Hinduism is opposed to the doctrine of living as we like. It is a mark of barbarianism. *Svechha Vihara* is not *swatantrata*. Common sense gives us an oversimplified picture of man. Pleasure is one of the dimensions of man. The pleasure doctrine or theory is the result of the first look and not a product of logical thought. The unanalytical and untutored deliverances of the senses cannot function as the criterion of right and wrong, and truth and error. We need to realize that our life of impulses is to be guided and integrated with the indwelling spirit in us. Hinduism is up against an unregulated and distracted existence which has no point or purpose except to merely exist. The Hindu theory of (*purusharthas*) the four-fold aspirations of man pays equal attention to all the sides of human nature and the different needs of man. It is in perfect accord with the realities of life and co-ordinates them all in the *summum bonum* of life.

The spiritual ideal of the Hindus has overshadowed their achievement in the fields of secular arts, crafts and fine arts. It has given many an unsympathetic critic the false view that Hinduism is other worldly; that it has despised vital aims, social satisfactions, obligations and aesthetic life. In short, they hold that Hinduism has conceded no reality to life and gives no significance to empirical values. This view has arisen because of a crude understanding of the two central concepts of Vedanta *Moksha* and *Maya*. It is a caricature to describe that India is a nation of sages and anchorites all of them eager to die and reserve a berth in the next world.

Hinduism as a spiritual religion was not unaware of the needs of the body and of men. They are vehicles for spiritual realization. They have to their credit a vast body of research in different



fields e.g., medicine, mental sciences and fine arts. The average human being is asked to marry and enjoy the disciplined pleasures of life which is inclusive of sex. What is prohibited is only anarchic indulgence of sex, promiscuously sought after. Further, pre-marital and extra-marital relations with women are ruled out. Sex is looked upon as a *sacrament*, and as the chief source for raising progeny healthy and intelligent. The life of the house-holder has been praised by all Hindu social thinkers. Renunciation is not advocated as a remedy for the impatient or the frustrated. Each individual has to discharge a three-fold obligation to the world in return to the gift for his existence. The three-fold obligations are described as (a) the debt to the (*devatas*) Gods; (b) the debt to our ancestors (*pitris*); (c) the debt to the (*ris*) sages. The attempt to discharge these debts makes man an ethical being and brings about swift regeneration in his nature. The individual has to study the scriptures, understand them, discuss its pros and cons with his teacher who instructs him until it sinks into him as his conviction. Study of the spiritual books is a must for the regeneration of man. It equips him with divine knowledge. The second obligation is to continue his progeny and live for some time as a house-holder. The third debt is to the sages. This consists in the performances of sacrifices. The central idea of all sacrifice is to give something of us to others. The Upanishads speak of three virtues, *Yagnana*, *dana* and *tapas* as necessary for the spiritual growth of man. In another context, the ethical message of the Upanishads is thundered in the words *damayata*, *datta* and *dayadam* (self-control, charity and compassion). The individual house-holder is to live an active moral life which has immense social significance.

Hinduism has a scheme of five-fold sacrifice (*panca-yagnana*) prescribed for the regeneration of man. They are called: (1) *Brahma Yagnana*, i.e., the sacrifice you make for the ultimate reality which is the supreme value. This sacrifice takes the form of reverent study of the scriptures under a competent illumined (*guru*) teacher. This is described as (*sravana*) listening; (2) *Pitri-yagnana*, i.e., the sacrifice we make through oblation to our ancestors in form of ceremonies on the New Moon Day, and on the days of their departure. This is to keep in mind the ancestors; (3) *Daiva Yagnana*, i.e., the sacrifice we offer to the presiding deities in Nature who give us plenty; (4) *Bali Yagnana* is



the sacrifice or the food we offer to spirits and animals around us; and (5) *Manusa Yagnana* the sacrifice in form of hospitality we show to our fellow human beings. The scheme of five sacrifices and the three debts that man has to discharge to society is an eloquent testimony to the fact that Hindu ethics has a strong social conscience.

It is on record that the house-holder cannot go away and renounce without discharging his duties. Will Durrant observes: "It is true that even across the Himalayan barriers, India has sent to us questionable gifts as grammar and logic, philosophy and fables, hypnotism and chess, and above all our numerals and our decimal system. But these are not the essence of her spirit, they are trifles compared to what we may learn from her in future. As invention, industry and trade bind the continents together, or as they fling us into conflict with Asia, we shall study its civilizations more closely, and shall absorb, even in enmity, some of its ways and thoughts. Perhaps in return for conquest, arrogance and spoilation, India will teach us the tolerance, the gentleness of the mature mind, the quiet content of the unacquisitive soul, the calm of the understanding spirit and an unifying and pacifying love of all living things." The Hindu concept of sex is sane and it does not suffer from the aberration of either suppression or unlimited expansion. The life of the house-holder is an institution which embodies the genius of Hindu spirituality. Their great contribution to the ethical thought of the world is based on the true understanding of the psychology of men and women. The great student and authority on sex, Havelock Ellis writes, "Sexual life has been sanctified and divinized to a greater extent than in any other part of the world. It seems never to have entered into the heads of the Hindu legislators that everything natural could be offensively obscure, a singularity which pervades all their writings, but is no proof of the depravity of their morals. Love in India, both as regards theory and practice, possesses an importance which is impossible for us to even conceive."<sup>1</sup>

---

1. *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, VI, p. 129.

## 10. The Concept of Dharma

THE SUPREME spiritual ideal of the Hindus is *moksha*, a state of existence where all doubts and disbeliefs are dispelled, and emotional tensions and strife overcome, for all time. The exclusive emphasis on this unique purpose of philosophy in India has tended to overshadow the contribution of Indian thought in respect of the moral and the logical ideals. The attainment of *moksha* is not achieved in a vacuum, nor is it pursued in a random and uncharted way. It is sought in the social life of man, by adopting primarily an ethical way of life as indispensable to it. There is no road to *moksha* that by-passes the moral ideal. The Upanishad declares, 'one who has not desisted from bad conduct, whose senses are not under control, whose mind is not concentrated, whose mind is not free from anxiety, cannot attain *moksha* through knowledge.'

The Hindu moral ideal is described in the word *dharma*, a word protean in its meaning and rich in significance. It is on the lips of all the Hindus. The four fundamental aspirations or values of Indian thought are: *artha* (wealth), *kama* (passions), *dharma* (moral good) and *moksha* (salvation). Even those systems that do not accept the concept of *moksha* erect *dharma* as the highest ideal. "If *moksha* is the pursuit of the kingdom of God, *dharma* is the pursuit of the kingdom of God on Earth." The extensive literature on the conception of the moral ideal goes by the name of *Dharmasastras*. The supreme source of *dharma* are the Vedas. Manu declares that the sources of *dharma* are: (1) the Vedas, i.e. *Sruti*, (2) *Smrti*, i.e. the moral

---

1. *Katha*, I, 2, 24.



codes, (3) the conduct of virtuous men, and (4) the individual's conscience.<sup>2</sup> The supreme authority of the Vedas as the source of the *dharma* has to be carefully examined. The Vedas do not deal, in detail, with many of the topics which pertain to social life, as the moral codes do. The recognition of the Vedic authority is almost a habit with all writers. It is only the *smritis*, i.e., the moral codes, that deal with the various religious practices (*samskaras*), the four *ashramas* and the four *varnas*, the rules of administration, the civil laws, the law of debts, sureties, civil and criminal procedure, etc. We get in the Vedas only bare mentions of and very vague references to one or two of the above details. Manu himself only in one place quotes a Vedic passage in support of his position.<sup>3</sup> So, as far as the detailed rules are concerned, the Vedas are not the main sources for our study of *Dharma*. Besides the Vedas, our veteran authority on the *Dharmasastras*, Mahamahopadhyaya P. V. Kane, has listed more than five thousand writers who have composed works, commentaries and digests by way of the *Dharmasastras*. The whole activity is estimated to have taken place from 500 B.C. to A.D. 800. In the historical development of the Hindu moral ideal, the *Nibandhas* i.e., the digests of Hindu Law, have played a great part in fixing the moral ideal of the age. These digest writers must have belonged to the people and known the changing views.<sup>4</sup> They gradually modified and extended the moral laws and brought them in line with the enlightened social conscience of the age. The writers of the digest, can be described (to borrow a phrase from Arnold Toynbee) "as the creative minority of the age," who prohibit certain practices, though they were permitted in earlier lines, e.g. the levirate, i.e. Niyoga system, the eight types of marriage and the ten varieties of sons, etc. These digest writers belonged to the people, understood their customs, needs and sentiments and managed to get sanction for them. Thus the changed practices of the moral codes became Law.<sup>5</sup> Unlike the stand of orthodox fanatical pundits, the digests have shown a living appreciation of the needs of the

---

2. *Manu Smriti*, II, 6.

3. *Manu Smriti*, II, 6.

4. A. S. Altekar, *Sources of Hindu Dharma*.

5. "Mahajano yena gatah sa panthah," *Mahabharata*, III, 333, 17.



age, and not a mere mechanical adherence to scripture in the determination of the moral ideal. There has been a growth in the formulation of the moral laws from time to time.<sup>6</sup>

The fundamental moral concept, '*Dharma*,' is central to Hindu ethical and religious thought. *Dharma* is described as that which sustains, upholds and nourishes society. Society falls to the ground when *Dharma's* hold is lost. It is like the comprehensive Platonic concept of Justice.<sup>7</sup> It is the pursuit of *Dharma* that gives us welfare and liberation. It is by treading the path of *Dharma* that one can live well and also realize the spiritual ideal. *Dharma* is the test we apply to men and civilizations in judging their worth. It is the measuring rod and also the check to our unbridled pursuit of passions, and wealth. It is the moral law that leads man to his final emancipation. It alone enables man to enjoy the fruits of life. On earth it regulates man's life. *Dharma* is what man ought to do. Towards the conclusion of the great epic, Mahabharata, Vyasa exclaims: "With uplifted arms I cry out—alas, none listens: through *dharma* one can gain material welfare and realize his desires as well; then, why is not *dharma* resorted to?" The Hindu mind has not been unaware of the different moral problems that assail us in the history of ethical thought. Thanks to the researches of Professor P. V. Kane, we no longer hold the view that everything in Hindu social life is fixed for ever by the sacred texts and that no change is possible or desirable in the social structure. The social practices and institutions handed down to us are not divinely ordained. All change is not irreligious or perverse.

The concept of *dharma* is not a static compound of precepts set down for all ages, for any and every, defined and undefined eventuality. It has undergone change in response to the needs of the times and the social conscience of the age. There is *parivartana*, i.e., change for *dharma*. Professor D. S. Sarma

---

6. See Sir P. S. Sivaswami Iyer's *Evolution of Hindu Moral Ideals*.

7. Plato Charmidae, 174. "It is not the life of knowledge, not even if it included all the Sciences, that creates happiness and well-being, but a single branch of knowledge—the Science of Good and Evil. If you exclude this from other branches, medicine will be equally able to give us health, and shoe-making shoes and tailoring wearing clothes. Seaman-ship will still save life at sea and strategy win battles. But without the knowledge of Good and Evil."



describes *dharma* as partaking of two natures: "It is half divine and half human." Being divine, it demands our obedience to its call; being human, it is subject to change with man's progress in knowledge. "*Dharma*," in the words of Radhakrishnan, "If it is too tight it will give way, and we will have lawlessness, anarchy and revolution. If it is too loose it will trip us and impede our movements."<sup>8</sup> The nature of the individual's *dharma* varies with his position, vocation and stage in life. All are not pressed into a single procrustean bed. In short, *dharma* is the law of one's own being. The Hindu mind has not lost sight of its complexity or the variety in human nature. There have been occasions when men experience conflict in respect of their moral duty. On such occasions primacy is given to the enlightened conscience of the moral man. On some occasions the powers of human reasoning are not able to conclusively favour any one path of duty; "the divine sages are of divided opinion, no one sage's opinion is accepted as authoritative at such a time, it looks that the moral good (*dharma*) is hidden in the caves." It is on such perplexing occasions that the individual conscience is declared to be the guide. Our poet Kalidasa declares, "When a good man is unable to make a decisive choice, he is to follow the voice of his conscience."<sup>9</sup> If he is not so cultivated as to do so, he is asked to take the guidance of the enlightened good men of the age (*Mahajana*).<sup>10</sup> Satisfaction of one's conscience, adherence to well established practices, and the guidance of good men are accepted as criteria for knowing *dharma*. A few facts emerge clearly from the study of our *Dharmasastras*. The concept of *dharma* in Indian thought is not a static compound of clearly defined prescriptions, never to be changed. It is a moral ideal growing in response to the age and to the enlightened social conscience of men. It is not a mere dictate from an external moral authority. Though the moral ideal is, in a sense, absolute, yet it is relative to the needs, position, occupations and other wants of men. There is the *sadharana dharma*, common to all, which distinguishes men from animals. Then we have

---

8. S. Radhakrishnan, *Religion and Society*, p. 119.

9. Kalidasa *Sakuntalam*, Act I.

*Satam hi sandehapadesu vastusu pramanam antahkaranapravritayah.*

10. *Mahabharata*, III, 333, 17.



the *varna dharmas* and the *ashrama dharmas*. These institutions secure co-ordination in the social activities of men; they are not a camouflage for the domination of one sect over others. They develop the individuality of each man, according to his own nature. The concept of *svadharma* is one of the splendid ethical concepts the Gita has given us. It points out that, when each individual takes to the work that is in accordance with his nature and mind, not with his birth, the duty is easy, graceful, spontaneous and efficient, and it becomes a delight to the doer.<sup>11</sup> As for the Hindu social institutions, we find that there has been change from time to time. But no moral or social institution can function well without personal morality behind it.

The Hindu mind has not been unalive to the changes necessary in moral ideals. They have discussed the changes in their digests (*nibandhas*), and have sanctified many innovations. This is an answer to the facile criticisms that there is no Hindu ethics. The ethical ideals are reached after intellectual discussion and the demands of the times. They have changed in many details the *dharma* of each age after discussion.

The Hindu concept of *dharma* brings to the forefront man's social conscience. For the average man, no way is left open except the dharmic life in society. He can grow to his best only by living in society. The Hindu mind did not neglect society. The huge literature in India about the arts and crafts, drama, dance, music and literature, points to the enlightened admiration of life in society. They integrated them all into the spiritual outlook. Their's is not a world-negating ideal. Full, free life, to them, meant not neglect of pleasures, but a careful cultivation of them and a controlled indulgence in them. Lord Krishna says, "I am the desire not contrary to dharma."<sup>12</sup>

The one great ideal that guided them in life and in their spiritual discipline is *dharma*. The familiar argument put forward is sometimes pragmatic. *Dharma* protects him that keeps it, and destroys its destroyer.<sup>13</sup> One prominent school of Indian Philosophy, the Prabhakara School of Mimamsa, held the view

11. See F. H. Bradley, *Ethical Studies*, Essay V. Bhagavan Das, *Hindu Social Organization*. G. H. Mess, *Dharma and Society*.

12. Gita, VII, ii.

13. *Dharma raksati raksitah, hato hanti*.



that *dharma* is not an instrumental value to achieve *moksha*, but an intrinsic value, i.e., it is an end in itself. The doctrine of the Mimamsakas has its counterpart in Kant's doctrine of duty for duty's sake. The hedonistic standpoint is completely rejected, and it is replaced by the principle of duty for duty's sake. Bradley in the West and Sankara in the East have respectively by their criticism shown the abstract nature of the doctrines of Kant, and the Mimamsakas.<sup>14</sup>

The Hindu conception of *dharma* is concrete. No moral ideal can be pursued in the abstract. It has to be intensively pursued in a definite human context, and not talked about in a speculative way. There is a definite correspondence here to the Aristotelian concept of morality, as an activity, as a mode of action, and not as a mere way of thought.

The Hindu moral ideal of *dharma* is best exemplified in their two epics: the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*.<sup>15</sup> The characters of Rama and Yudhisthira are personifications of *dharma*. The necessity to uphold *dharma* under all circumstances is brought out in all the telling anecdotes of India's ancient lore, in simple non-pedantic language, for the masses.

The *Ramayana*, by the delineation of Rama's character under different circumstances explains the way of life and the workings of the mind of one who is a *Dharmatma*. The *Mahabharata* is called the fifth Veda.<sup>16</sup> It is the treasure-house for the elucidation of the moral ideal in all its complexity and diversity. The author exhorts us to conform to *dharma* even if it involves the

---

14. See F. H. Bradley's *Ethical Studies*, Essay IV and M. Hiriyanna's *The Quest for Perfection*, pp. 21-36.

15. The two Epics are regarded as epitome of Indian Culture. *Ramayana* is the 'epic of art' and *Mahabharata* the epic of growth. The epics have a nucleus of historical truth and they elucidate the great teachings of the Vedas to the masses through the medium of interesting stories. Sri Aurobindo writes, "Not all perhaps can enter at once into the spirit of this (*Ramayana*) masterpiece, but those who have once done so will never admit any poem in the world as its superior."

16. "Whatever is said of the fourfold aspiration of man elsewhere is found here. What is not said here is found nowhere." *Dharma ca, artha ca, Kama ca, Mokse ca, Bharatarabha Yadihasti tad annyatra, yannahasti na kutra cit.*



frustration of all worldly desires, leads to frightful consequences and poverty, and threatens the destruction of one's life.<sup>17</sup>

In the Ramayana, on the eve of his banishment, Rama exclaims to his brother that human experience makes clear that the pursuit of *Dharma* alone brings in its trail wealth, pleasures and all else in the manner one attains all the *Purusarthas* (aspirations) from marriage with a beloved and obedient wife.<sup>18</sup>

The Hindu concept of *dharma* has been responsible for the survival of the Hindu way of life and its love of peace and tolerance of others. To the fundamental questions, as to what keeps society, or a group of men or a nation, or as a matter of fact, the whole world in peace; what makes them flourish? The answer of the Hindu sages is *dharma*. "A people flourished, not because of a constitution or coercion of a law-giver, but because they are guided by *dharma* and help each other in co-operation."<sup>19</sup> It is this principal moral ideal that counts in the last analysis. Plato in his *Republic* asks us, "Do you imagine, that political constitutions spring from a rock or, a tree and not from the dispositions of citizens which turn the scale and draw all else in their direction? . . . constitutions are as the men are and grow out of their character."<sup>20</sup> It is no use to have laws on the statute book unless they be embodied in our social life. The ancient Indian thinkers, Buddhists and Hindus alike, hold that the concept of *dharma* is the soul of India.

The Yajur Veda declares, "*Dharma* is the support of the whole universe. In this world, all men approach the man of *dharma* for guidance. By *dharma* sin is destroyed. In *dharma* everything is established. Therefore, they say, *dharma* is supreme."

The great Buddhist Asvagosha exclaimed to all,

Fly the flag of *Dharma*

---

17. "Na jatu Kamam na bhayan, na lobhad, dharmam tyajed, dharma nityah."

18. Ramayana, II, 21, 57.

19. Naiva rajyam narad asit na  
Dando na ca dandikah  
Dharmenaiva prajah sarvah  
Raksanti sma parasparam.

—Mahabharata Santiparva.

20. Republic, VIII, 544 (Jowett's translation).



Sound the conch of *Dharma*

Pound aloud the drum of *Dharma*

Keep to *Dharma*, keep to *Dharma*, keep to *Dharma*.<sup>21</sup>

---

21. *Prasaraya Dharmadhvajam*  
*Prapuraya Dharmasankham*  
*Pratadaya Dharmadundubhim*  
*Dharmam kuru, dharmam kuru, dharmam kuru.*

## 11. The Concept of Moksha

INDIAN PHILOSOPHICAL systems are the systematized intellectual expressions of the spiritual experiences of the sages of the Vedas and Teachers like Gautama the Buddha and Mahavira. Reason and logic explain and work out the implications of the spiritual experience. The vedantic systems put the experience on the plane of thought. In this activity, the Vedantins of the theistic and the absolutistic persuasions have not failed to observe that spiritual experience is beyond the pale of thought, that thought is external to it and cannot, therefore, adequately comprehend it.

The purpose of philosophy is to attain the supreme value. It is an intrinsic value and an end in itself, and not a means to any other end. It is eternal and absolute. It is a state of existence in which there are no doubts or disbeliefs, no tension or stress. It is a state where one has no pains and is free from the three-fold sufferings (*tapatraya*). The soul who has attained *moksha* is called a '*mukta*.' He is not touched by bodily or mental diseases (*adhyatmika*), nor by beasts, birds and natural agents (*adhibhautika*) and not even by ghosts, spirits or supernatural agents (*adhidaivika*). He does not return to the world of *samsara*. All the systems of Indian philosophy set *Moksha* as the final good of man. They may differ in their general description of the idea and the means to attain it. But they all affirm that *Moksha* and the attainment of *Moksha* is the philosophic ideal. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, '*Moksha* is the master word in Indian Philosophy. The ultimate purpose of philosophy is not so much speculative, or the clarification of propositions or the examination of the presuppositions of thought as the desire to get rid of the limitations of earthly life and the consequent



sorrow in it.' "The released soul passed beyond sorrow," says the Chandogya Upanishad. The concept of *Moksha* is the unique and distinguishing mark of Indian philosophy. The ideal is a religious one, and it is also pragmatic. But we must differentiate this pragmatism from that of the American philosopher, William James. The Indian philosopher says, "It is not modern pragmatism. It is not the view that truth is measured in terms of the practical. It states that truth is the only sound guide for practice, that truth alone has efficacy as a guide for salvation."

The ultimate nature of *Moksha* is that of an integral experience. The experience is not merely cognitive. Logic studies experience purely from the cognitive standpoint. Experience is a value-complex, it includes significance and values in it, so the cognitive and the rational mode is not the only way to realize it. There are modes other than the cognitive, that give us the integral experience. The experimental realization of reality is *Moksha*. It is hardly just to call this a dogmatic attitude. It is also not a purely pragmatic attitude of the American type. It is the quest of the supreme value.

Some critics have laid the charge of other-worldliness upon Hindu thought, as arising from this ideal of *Moksha*. Concentration on the quest for *Moksha*, it is said, breeds contempt for all the things of this world and consequently ethical life loses all its significance. This criticism arises from a prejudice and is far from the truth.

Indian thought has recognized the value of *Moksha*, not to the neglect of the other three aspirations of human life, *artha*, *kama* and *dharma*. The Hindus never held a negative view of life. They regarded the world as the vale of soul-making. Our Upanishads have described two important characteristics of spiritual experience, namely its uniqueness, and the pervasiveness of the reality experienced. The consciousness of the pervasive nature of reality and of its manifestation through all life makes one necessarily and spontaneously cultivate what is called 'reverence for life'. It is the consciousness of the fundamental oneness of reality that makes for the fellowship of faiths. We come to know from our spiritual experience that all that exists in this world of fact and value is informed and actuated by the One. The *mukta* soul knows all that is infinite. "Poetry, music,



beauty in all its forms, self-forgetful identification with any noble cause, soaring on the wings of the inspired intellect into speculations and discoveries of vast scientific and artistic truths" are the trumpet calls from the Divine. From the life and activities of souls that have had spiritual realization, we know that they never encouraged a world-negating attitude.

The two human aspirations, desire and wealth, are not banned. We find in Hindu thought injunctions to strive for wealth in a moral manner. Nobody can enjoy the pleasures of life without money, or *artha*. But we are asked to make money in approved ways. We are asked to avoid anti-social activities. We are left free to express our legitimate desires. Desires are the raw materials that make our personality. If we had no desires we could not achieve anything. The word *Kama* does not mean merely sex-desire. What is forbidden is the impulsive life that has no discipline. It is very pleasant to follow the way our impulses propel us. It works according to what Freud calls 'the pleasure-principle'. We have to grow beyond the pleasure-principle. If we do not do so, we get fixated at a very low level. It causes us much pain to overcome our impulses. It is these unbridled impulses that lend us to humiliating acts, mean motives and anti-social desires. The impulses are so strong that, even when reason tells us that indulgence in them will land us in social obloquy and material disorder, we do not listen to its voice. It is such merely impulsive life that is condemned in Hindu thought. In short, Hindu thought does not cut at the root of desire, but pleads for a careful cultivation of the ends of life. It must not be opposed to *Dharma*. Hindu thought does not forbid us from developing all the aspects of the human personality in an integrated manner. No aspect of human life should grow in a disproportionate manner. The instrumental values of *artha*, *kama* and *dharma* are not to be erected into ends in themselves. They should subserve the cause of *Moksha*. The four-fold values imply an integrated view of life.

The concept of *Moksha* has a special merit. It recognizes the unique divine element in the composition of man. It affirms the essential spiritual nature of man. To neglect the spiritual dimension in man and merely treat him as a psychosomatic animal is not correct. It is an incomplete approach to the nature



of man. The concept of *Moksha* does justice to this higher aspect of man.

The concept itself takes three distinct forms. But all of them agree that bondage is due to ignorance and liberation is the result of *jnana*. *Jnana* is not the mediate rational knowledge we have. It is immediate integral experience, which enables us to be the object itself and not merely to know it. To attain *Moksha* we have to get rid of illusion and become illumined.

*Moksha* is described by Sankara as not a thing that has to be attained hereafter. He takes the unique stand that *Moksha* is native to the soul of man. It is the realization of the intrinsic nature of the soul. It is the state of non-dual-existence which is perfect bliss. Every soul is of this nature. Souls are never finite and particularized entities. *Atman* is one, the empirical selves are many. It is *maya* that is responsible for the separatist fallacy. With spiritual realization, *maya* disappears, and the soul realizes its true nature. *Moksha* is real but not yet realized. It is not something that is produced (*Utpadya*), for, that which is born is bound to die and cannot be eternal. *Moksha* is the uncreated light in us all. Nor is *Moksha* an attainment (*Prapya*). It is not a kind of becoming. We are Brahman and we don't become Brahman. The scripture says, "That thou art," and not, "Thou wilt become that." Nor is *Moksha* a transformation (*Samskarya*). It is not a journey to another place. It is what we are in reality. "It is making known what is already there and not a bringing into being." We are, in the words of Sankara, "like the musk deer that runs hither and thither in search of the fragrance which is all the time exuding from its own body." Sankara's conception of *Moksha* makes *Moksha* possible here and now, i.e., *jivanmukti* and *Moksha* are the birthrights of all.

The contrast to this conception is the theistic view which holds that *Moksha* is alien and not native to the soul of man. It is the result of the Grace of the Lord. "It is not obtainable either by our acuteness of reasoning or probity of learning, but is accessible only to the loving heart of the individual soul to whom He gifts grace."<sup>1</sup> No efforts of man, neither his intellect

---

1. *Katha*, I, 2, 23.



nor his ethical life, can command grace. The grace of God is His gift and not the achievement of man. The scripture says, "whomsoever He chooses to reveal to, gets the revelation." Human longing for God is not the cause of this grace, but its condition. "Hunger is not the cause of food, but the condition for the enjoyment of food." Grace is not limited, nor conditioned by any external factor. It is the nature of the Lord to bestow grace. It is described by Ramanuja as '*nirhetuka kataksa*'. As for the human being, he has to make himself ready for the reception of grace. The soul is gruff and gross. We must empty it of self-love, of all *ahamkaras*, i.e., self-sense and egoism. That is the celebrated doctrine of the unconditional self-surrender to the Lord which the Gita advocates.

Critics might question: If *Moksha* is the exclusive gift of God, there is no certainty of our attaining *Moksha*. It becomes arbitrary. Vedanta Desihka suggests that, if *Moksha* is left to be achieved by man's intellectual and moral achievements, he would never get it. It is good that the gift of *Moksha* is in God's hands. God's love of man is infinitely greater than man's love of his own spiritual welfare.

It is wrong to believe that grace would negate morality. Morality and ethical excellence are necessary, but not sufficient causes for attaining *Moksha*.

The *Sankhya Nyaya*, and the *Mimamsaka* systems also envisage *Moksha* as the supreme spiritual ideal. They hold the view that in *Moksha* the soul is without any pain. The *Nyaya-Vaisesika* system describes *Moksha* as a state where the soul is divested of all knowledge, feeling and action. It is just like a stone, even consciousness is not its intrinsic nature. The poet Sri Harsa describes the *Nyaya* conception of *Moksha* as that of the bull (*Gomata*) and not Gautama, the founder's name. The argument of the *Nyaya* school is that pleasure and pain are inextricably connected with each other, that the avoiding of pain necessitates the avoiding of pleasure as well. *Moksha* is an escape from both. It is a state of the soul devoid of all adventitious characteristics, e.g., volition, desire, pleasure, pain, knowledge, feeling. The realization is to be had by the removal of the *mithya-jnana* that all qualities are the real attributes of the soul. The removal of the *mithya-jnana* is the purpose of the study of the *Nyaya* Logic.



The *Sankhya Moksha* is called *Kaivalya*. It is attained by the immediate realization of the distinctness and independent nature of the two categories, *purusa* and *prakrti*. Owing to *aviveka* (non-discrimination) the *purusa* identifies himself with the *vrттis* of the *Buddhi*, *ahamkara* and *manas*. The realization of their distinctness is *Moksha*. The Yoga system of Patanjali has outlined a psychosomatic discipline to achieve it. In the state of *Moksha* the soul rests in itself. It is immutable. It is of the nature of consciousness, but conscious of nothing.

The *Mimamsa* system regards *Moksha* as a state of existence in which the soul is free from its three-fold empirical encumbrances. They are (1) the physical body which enjoys pain and pleasure; (2) the organs of sense and action which relate us to objects; (3) the external world which is the object of experience. When the soul is freed from all these things, the things do not cease to exist. They are real, and not illusory. The soul attains its pure state by the performance of the scripture-ordained duties and refraining from the scripture-prohibited acts. Also the soul is not to undertake any selfish activities. The self in *Moksha* is consciousness, but unlike in the *Nyaya* system it retains the capacity for manifesting such features as knowledge, feeling, etc.

In the atheistic systems of Indian philosophy, Buddhism and Jainism, *Moksha* is attained through self-culture based on virtues, concentration of mind and wisdom. They result from a form of severe self-discipline. Gautama the Buddha exhorts us,

Seek nought from helpless gods by gift and hymn,  
Nor bribe with blood, nor feed with fruits and cakes.  
Within yourself deliverance must be sought,  
Each man his poison makes.

But, latter-day Buddhism raised Buddha to the status of God and believed that his grace was necessary for Nirvana.

From our brief survey it is clear that *Moksha* is the master-passion and goal of Indian philosophic thought. *Moksha* must be distinguished from *Svarga*. *Svarga* is the paradise, or heaven, which men reach to enjoy the fruits of their *Karma*. One of our *Puranas* distinguishes the *Moksha* ideal from heaven. In heaven, the soul is always obsessed by the fact that he will

have to return to the world when the fruits of good deeds are expended. There is also the feeling of discomfort for the soul resulting in different types of joy enjoyed by other souls. The sense of gradation is there. All these are absent in *Moksha*.



## 12. The Doctrine of Karma

ALL THE philosophical systems of India, with the exception of the Carvaka (the Indian materialistic system), believe in the doctrine of Karma in one form or another. The doctrine is simple in its conception, but full of implications. It is a part of the Perennial Philosophy, countenanced by the record of the general spiritual inheritance of man!

Karma is the moral Law of Causation. It declares that man's will is free, and that he is responsible for all his actions. We are the architects of our fortune and misfortune. "The fault... is in ourselves and not in our stars." Human suffering neither arises of itself nor is it unavoidable. What we sow, we reap. The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* states that,

a person consists of his desires, and as is his desire, so is his will, and as is his will, so is his deed; and whatever deed he does, that he will reap.

A few of the Indian philosophical systems do not admit the existence of God, but they never demur to the doctrine of Karma. They find the Law of Karma enough for them. Gautama the Buddha gave the Law of Karma great importance. Sankara regards man as superior to the animal world on the ground that he has the power of knowledge and the free will to act as a responsible agent. Man is described as the image of God in Christian theology because, in all creation, man alone has the two qualities of the Lord, namely, intelligence and free will. The doctrine of Karma affirms this responsibility of man. If man is not

made responsible for his acts, it is not right to punish him. The old Garuda Purana observes,

No one gives joy or sorrow.  
That others give us these is an incorrect notion;  
Our own deeds bring us their fruits.  
Body of mine! Repay what you have done!

Moral reprobation and approbation lose all meaning if man is not responsible for his action. But once a man accepts that he is responsible for his actions, he does not feel bitter at the outcome of his deeds. His realization makes possible the spirit of willing acceptance, without railing against God or an outcry against divine injustice. Inequalities in status, talent, fortune, etc., can all then be regarded as absolutely just, since each gets his reward for his action. Karma leaves no room for bitterness or jealousy of others' possessions. It offers us confidence that we can make what we like of ourselves through effort. There is no dark destiny that governs us blindly and makes sport of us. We are the masters of our fate and the captains of our soul. Such self-confidence helps us to live a free life. It rouses and strengthens a sense of moral responsibility.

It is strange that, in the face of great implications of the doctrine of Karma, the late Professor Keith should have written, "The conception of Karma . . . is essentially fatalistic, and fatalism is not for a normal mind a good incentive to moral progress." For, in fact, the doctrine states that the universe is not a chance-world. It is moral to the core and is not *a-moral* as some rationalists think. The moral law that governs the minds and morals of men is reflected in the outer laws of nature. According to the Law of Karma man may have fortitude in reverses, for a good cause can never fail or come to grief.

The problem of evil has made many reject the existence of God. The critics find that a benevolent and omnipotent God is inconsistent with the existence of evil in the world. If God permits evil in spite of his power to rout it, he is malevolent; if evil exists in spite of his goodness, he is impotent. The Law of Karma saves God from this dilemma. He is not the creator of evil. Evil is the result of man's free will to choose either the right or the wrong. Sankara meets the reproach that God is



partial in the dispensation of the goods of life and that he is cruel to some (*vaismya* and *nairghrnya*) by pointing out that it is in accordance with the *karma* of the individuals and not the whim of the Lord:

The position of the Lord is to be looked on as analogous to that of *Parjanya*, the Giver of rain: For as *Parjanya* is the common cause of the production of rice, barley, and other plants, while the difference between the various species is due to the various potentialities lying hidden in the respective seeds, so the Lord is the common cause of the creation of gods, men, etc., while the differences between these classes of beings are due to the different merits belonging to the individual souls. Hence the Lord, being bound by regards (to merit), cannot be reproached with inequality of dispensation and cruelty.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the problem of evil is no problem for the believer in Karma. It results from wrong exercise of man's free will, and can be overcome by human effort. Evil is not ultimate. It is a challenge and an opportunity for man's moral effort. The doctrine of Karma does not mean that a record is maintained in some book and we are punished according to it after our death. The universe itself is moral, and the working out of the moral law is no external judgment dealt out by some external Judge, waiting till we die.

The doctrine of Karma affirms the dignity of man. Man is not "a lump of flesh and bones, controlled by conditioned reflexes, social pressure and economic laws." He is not powerless to rise above the forces that envelope him. But let us understand the process rightly. Every deed that we do leads to two results. First of all we have the direct consequences of the act, pleasant or painful. Secondly, the act leaves some mental impression, propensities (*vasanas* or *samskaras*), in the soul. The consequences cannot be averted; they are the necessary element in Karma. But the evil tendencies we may resist with moral effort.

The doctrine of Karma, therefore, is not to be treated as a

---

1. See *Vedanta Sūtras* II, 1-34.

form of fatalism. A man's actions are, of course, partly determined, but not by any cosmic caprice. They are determined by the dispositions of the self. The ancient sage Yajnavalkya in his *smṛti* points out that Karma does not mean mere fate. He says:

Fortune comes to the person who is as energetic as a lion, but cowards think that it is a gift of fate; let us overcome this fate by our power and make all possible personal endeavours; no blame will attach to us if our best efforts do not succeed. The truth of the matter is that success in life depends on both our present personal endeavours and past deeds, which now appear as Fate or destiny. Just as a chariot cannot move on one wheel, so fate (*daiva*) without personal effort cannot lead to success.

Thus, the doctrine of *Karma* reconciles freedom and necessity, and does not conflict with progress. It acknowledges no liquidation of moral effort. The effort is carried into the next birth and perfected in a number of lives. Reincarnation is the corollary to the doctrine of *Karma*. For *Karma* is not a mere doctrine of retribution; together with reincarnation it makes a picture of spiritual continuity and growth. The Bhagavad Gita, the great scripture of devotion, does not belittle moral effort. In two celebrated verses it exhorts us:

Let a man lift himself, let him not degrade himself; for the Self alone is the friend of the Self and the Self alone is the enemy of the Self. For him who has conquered his lower self by the higher Self his self is a friend, but for him who has not possessed his higher Self, his very Self will act in enmity like an enemy.



### 13. *The Value of Reincarnation*

THE DOCTRINES of reincarnation and karma are integral to a sound philosophy of life. They are not abstract metaphysical doctrines invented by theorists and elaborated by theologians. Indian philosophic thought maintains these doctrines as a part of its general outlook, not in the interest of speculative metaphysics but for the light they throw on the ultimate significance of life. This is not to suggest that the doctrines do not stand the test of logic or of *scientific* ways of thinking. The significant claim of human life should never be sacrificed on the altar of a delimited conception of reason.

Human life on this planet is limited and hedged in, in every way. "The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; neither is there always bread for the wise, nor riches for the men of understanding." We all struggle with hopes and fears, love and hate. With all this we witness men's irrepressible thirst for life. They take to human life and existence without any misgiving, without being deterred by the experiences of disillusionment. They hand on this questionable gift called life to successive generations, who take to it with an unquestioning confidence similar to that of their progenitors. This optimism in life (to use the phrase of G. Lowes Dickenson) overrides the demands of intellect and refuses to be lured by the current scientific rationalist creeds.

Human life has a definite purpose and the evolutionary process a meaning. If we do not posit such a conception we need not care for man or his behaviour. Man would be the offspring of apes, and his virtue and vice, his civilization and vandalism, the by-products of an Oedipus complex, or of his ductless glands.



Once we posit, however, that the ideal of life is not mere life, but the development of the Spirit of man, we are able to see how one human life is not enough. Death loses all its horror because there is bound to be the opportunity for the continuous development of spirit in a number of lives. Moral effort is meaningful because the ground covered is to be extended.

Every baser impulse turned into sweetness, every mean motive mastered, every humbling weakness overcome counts in this effort.

*Samsara*, as Professor Radhakrishnan put it, "is a succession of spiritual opportunities." There is no liquidation of moral efforts. Such a liquidation is possible only in a spiritually bankrupt world.

Further, a little reflection on human life points to the fact that life is not so transcendently good that it deserves, without reference to anything else, to be treated as a good in itself. Man certainly has a destiny more august than the enjoyment of life of sensual pleasures for a period of three-score years and ten. A life that is a round of pleasures may be acceptable to a few fortunate men but it certainly does not commend itself to the imaginative and the intelligent. Dickenson observes with great insight "that too few of us surely attain the good even of which we are capable; too many are capable of too little, and all are capable for a short time."

This is argument enough for the doctrine of rebirth. But this doctrine has a very long intellectual ancestry.

"Pythagoras, Plato and Empedocles regard rebirth as almost axiomatic. . . . If we turn to the Hebrews, there are traces of it in Philo and it was definitely adopted in the Kabbala. The Sufi writers accept it. About the beginning of the Christian era it was current in Palestine . . . within the Christian Church it was held during the first centuries by isolated Gnostic sects. . . . Origen believed in it. In the Middle Ages the tradition was continued by the numerous sects collectively known as Cathari. At the Renaissance Bruno upheld it. . . . Swedenborg states it in modified form. Goethe played with it, while Lessing and Herder believed in it seriously . . . and among the contemporary philosophers there are at least half a dozen who believe in it."

Many philosophers in East and West have used their powers



of reason to prove the immortality of the soul and the doctrine of reincarnation. In the East, the Indian materialist, Carvaka asked, "After the body is cremated and reduced to ashes, how can it ever return to life?" Subsequent systems have answered this. This is the problem the ideal spiritual aspirant Naciketas set before Yama, the Lord of Death. "There is a doubt regarding the man who is dead; some say he survives and others, he does not." The Nyaya writer Udayana has a book explaining the nature of the Self—*Atmatatta Viveka*. Kumarila has examined the reality and established the nature of Self and the necessity for rebirth in his *Sloka Vartika*. Plato in his *Timaeus* has argued in favour of the immortality of the soul. Kant has accepted it as a postulate. Among the nineteenth-century thinkers McTaggart's attempt with reference to this topic is most impressive and illuminating.<sup>1</sup> If the self is not produced by the body, it need not be ended when the body is destroyed. If we admit a beginning for the soul it cannot be immortal. Immortality is incompatible with creation at birth or destruction at death.

The problems of human education, moral progress and spiritual growth have meaning and significance only if we accept the doctrine of reincarnation. Without such acceptance they are mere wavering and amusing activities with no end in view except a life of sensation. As at the biological level, so in human life too, there is the law of continuity of progress. At the human level the ideal of man is to become perfect. The educability and perfectibility of man cannot rest on the unsound doctrine that there is nothing before the cradle and beyond the grave. Man builds his edifice of perfection not in one life but through intense struggle in a number of lives. Every physical and mental act of man produces an effect on the character, the disposition, the instincts and the tendencies of the agent. This effect is carried in the form of *vasanas* or *samskaras*, i.e., mental impressions in the discarnate soul (*suksma sarira*). The ancient theory of a finer body (*linga sarira*) has received support from psychical research today. Sceptical scientists hostile to the doctrine of survival, like Hyslop and Alfred Russel Wallace, have accepted the reality of psychic phenomena.

The Gita points out that spiritual worth acquired by any one, however meagre it may be, is never destroyed. The imperfect

---

1. See his *Nature of Existence*, Vol. II, Chapter LXIII.



yogic powers attained in one life secure for the aspirant appropriate opportunities in the next life for the completion of the endeavour.

The building up of human personality and the possibility of moral improvement necessitate the doctrine of reincarnation. One life is hardly enough for a man of average abilities to build up his personality. Human beings cannot have an adequate glimpse of the eternal values of life. The art of soul-making is a hard task. Many are called and few are chosen. Among thousands of men that strive only a few attain.

Reincarnation gives opportunity to many a Judas to make amends for his sins. It would mean frustration of the "divine purpose", if men had only one life and no opportunity to become perfect. The innumerable deaths of infants and young men all over the world would be a dead loss if they should have no opportunity for further development. Life Eternal and utter annihilation are not the only alternatives, as some sectarian theologies hold. Infinite opportunities are provided for the soul to save itself. The great Lord, Isvara, is not a cruel, whimsical deity witnessing with amusement the universal drama of life. He is not the mere ultimate goal, nor is He merely the Lord of the universe. He is the friend of all of us (*suhrd sarvabhutanam*).

Our criminal codes, laws of punishment and prisons have for their final object the improvement of man. Progress, civilization and new orders are possible because there are going to be opportunities for the development of man in a series of births. If that is denied, these have no place. Any reform in these spheres must have in view the principle of reincarnation.

In the very act of living it is belief in the doctrine of reincarnation that gives hope and substance to life. It fills us with zest and enthusiasm and makes our effort a reality. The concept of progress and reform acquires a stable basis and an added meaning. This belief again is our safeguard against the corrosive influence of pessimistic creeds. But for this doctrine life would bear very hard upon us. Without it, human life is indeed,

... a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
And then is heard no more; it is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.

(Shakespeare, *Macbeth*)



## 14. *A Critique of the Concept of Ahimsa*

THE CONCEPT of *ahimsa* is a complex ethical virtue. It has figured prominently and is given an enormous significance, in the religion of Jainism. It has acquired special importance as a philosophy of life, and a technique of action has grown around the concept, at the hands of Mahatma Gandhi, for over a period of three decades. Further, the concept of *ahimsa* has great significance for us today when we are insistently contemplating a new social order which will outlaw war from our midst.

Manu and the *Mahabharata* have declared that the cardinal virtues of Hinduism are purity, self-control, detachment, truth and non-violence. Non-violence is the law of love. The sacredness of life in all sentient creation is affirmed as a cardinal truth. Offence to sentient creation in any form is violence, e.g., physical injury, killing, hurting the feelings, insulting them, destroying their rights, or dignity of self-sense. Violation of any of these is named *himsa*. Their observance is described as *ahimsa*. The Jains carried the doctrine to incredible lengths. They were against killing in any form. They held the opinion that neither should we kill, nor get the killing done through an agent. The mere thought of killing is as much a moral evil, as the actual act of killing. Any word expressing the desire to kill is also evil. The principle of *ahimsa* involves purity of thought, word and deed in the practice of universal love. It is described as a great vow (*Mahavrata*). The Hindu ethical thinkers looked upon *ahimsa* as one of the *Sadharana Dharmas*. But they did not insist on its unexceptionable application to all defined and undefin-



ed eventualities. They made exceptions. In sacrifices they held the opinion that, animals can be killed, because the killing is enjoined by the Vedas. The sacrificial nature of the act purifies the agent and the animal alike; hence it is not deemed unethical. Kings were allowed to kill forest animals for sport. Vegetarianism was not deemed a violent act. The use of violence was not completely ruled out in Hindu ethics. It was hedged in by a number of restrictions. An unwarranted and arbitrary use of it, for the mere pleasure, in order to spite others, is condemned severely. The use of violence is to be minimal in the case of the Brahmin and the hermit. The ideal Brahmin is to use spiritual force against physical violence even for self-protection. Though the Hindu emphasizes the supremacy of spiritual power, he does not say that physical force should not be used. There is a celebrated verse in the *Mahabharata* which clinches the issues and formulates the ideal: "In the front the four Vedas; at the back the bow with arrows; on one side the spirit achieving its object through the might of spirit, on the other side military force achieving its ends."

Force and violence are used to bring the anti-social and anti-ethical elements under control. Non-violence is the highest principle to which we are exhorted to approximate. Perfect *ahimsa* is an ideal. It is like the straight line in geometry. Because we are not able to love our enemies and win them over, we should not submit to injustice or acquiesce in the horrors done by others. There should be no neutrality between good and bad, values and disvalues. Manu declares that those who poison us, burn us, and kill us ought to be killed. The use of violence is necessary to stay off and punish anti-social and aggressive elements who hold the doctrine that Might is Right. The Hindu *Rajya Dharma* makes a clear distinction between violence (*himsa*) and punishment (*danda*). "The former causes injury to an innocent person; the latter is legal restraint of guilt." Force is not the law-giver but it is an instrument that ministers to the need of *Dharma*. The theory of punishment is ingrained and worked into the structure of the cosmos. None can escape the consequences of his acts. No act of ours is private and none is unimportant. The act in its trail brings the punishment like Fate. Sometimes the punishment is realized here and now and at other times in the future life. The elaborate description of



hell and the torments there and the pleasures of paradise are the means by which Hindu religion persuades men to do good and to keep away from evil. The Hindu theory of punishment is retributive and deterrent in its motive.

The *Bhagavad Gita* is regarded by many, with the exception of Sankara and Gandhiji, as supporting and enjoining the use of violence against an evil doer.<sup>1</sup> The message of the Gita according to them is to fight the enemy and crush it. Arjuna is a warrior (Kshatriya). Krishna tried all peaceful modes of bringing peace between the two families; but, having failed, he advises Arjuna to fight for the cause of justice and from a sense of duty, as an act of dedication to the Lord, against the selfish and unrighteous foes. Krishna declared after the unsuccessful ambassadorial mission, "Duryodhana was told what was truthful, wholesome and beneficial; and the fool is not amenable. I consider therefore chastisement by war, *danda*, the fourth expedient, as proper for the sinner; by no other means can they be curbed."

Violence has to be used to hold in check unruly elements. The Gita in modern political parlance stands for the principle of collective security and asks us to fight all unjust aggression. *Ahimsa* does rule out the use of force. Perfect *ahimsa* belongs to the sage. Violence is neutral in its ethical nature. Its value is determined by the use it is put to. A knife in the hands of a murderer leads to crime. We cannot say that violence in itself is evil.

Gandhiji's interpretation of the concept of *ahimsa* is a glorious chapter in the history of Indian ethical thought and Hindu ethics. He regards 'violence' as evil in itself. He does not consider it as neutral. He is uncompromising in his opposition to it. He wanted to build a world based on truth and non-violence; and not on untruth and lovelessness. He believed that violence can bring no good to man in any sphere. His doctrine is built on his conception of human nature as essentially good. He believed that man is divine in his essence. He also believed in the oneness of the Spirit that is behind all creation. It is our false view that "We are so many separate floating islands," that is responsible for our violence. "There cannot be happiness for any one of us until it is won for all." Fear is the cause of violence,

---

1. The injunction, to fight, is repeated five times in the Gita.



according to the Gandhian analysis. Fear is the most degrading human emotion. It destroys our mind and corrupts our morals. This is the reason why on many occasions Gandhi said that he "preferred violence to cowardice." The moment we realize that we are all parts of a single Spirit, there will be no violence, for the simple reason that it hurts one's own self. The *Brihadaranyaka* declares, "Fear results only from a second principle."<sup>2</sup> Further, Gandhiji believed that men are perfectible and educable through persuasion and reason. So, he declared that he would continue to preach non-violence till such time as there was no one of the opposite view. "If blood is to be shed, let it be mine." He believed that good would ultimately triumph. He wanted not only individuals to use non-violence but nations and groups. He did not admit that what was ethically good for an individual could ever be politically reprehensible for the nation. He did not divide politics and morals, nor ends and means. He believed that an unjust means defeats any good end. In his philosophy ends and means are convertible terms. The end can never justify the means. Nor did he agree with the communist that the *ends are the means*. It is wrong to think that non-violence is an impracticable utopia, it is the urgent need of the age. The alarming nuclear developments, the inconclusiveness of wars, and the damage that war does not only to the combatants but also to the civilians and the future generations, is enough to regard non-violence as the imperative need of the age. We have realized today that wars are politically stupid, economically futile and ethically unjustifiable. If we do not have faith in the divine nature of man, it is difficult for us to give up violence. If we think that human cussedness and the principle of evil is part and parcel of reality, as real as man's goodness, it is difficult for us to outlaw violence. It all depends ultimately on our faith and our conception of man.

Further, the psychology of violence is self-defeating. Every act of violence produces defiance in the others whom we attack. Violence produces greater violence. The greater violence is defeated by a much greater violence. The violence is not stopped. It leads to a series of world-wars. What we need is to put an end to violence. This can be done by *ahimsa* or soul force.

---

2. *Brihadaranyaka*, I. 4.2.



We should not run away from the scene. We meet the enemy to give him an opportunity to reflect on the wrong he has done. We seek to educate him and convert him not by inflicting physical violence on him. It is a lateral approach. It seeks to overcome the opposition by changing the mind of the opponent. All this is based on the faith that man is essentially good. Anybody whose faith falters in this has no use for non-violence. Non-violence is not for the weak. The *Mahabharata* declares, "The hard is overcome by the gentle; even the non-hard is overcome by it; there is nothing impossible for the gentle, therefore the gentle is more powerful."<sup>3</sup>

"Therefore let man overcome anger by non-anger, let him overcome evil by good, let him overcome the miser by liberality, let him overcome the liar by truth."<sup>4</sup>

It is again the metaphysical faith in the unity of existence that makes the Hindu proclaim that "Non-violence is the highest truth, from which all other truths proceed."<sup>5</sup> There is no denying the fact that *ahimsa* played a very important role in the ethical philosophy of the Hindus.

- 
3. *Mrduna darunam hanti Mrduna hanti adarunam  
Nasadhyam mrduna kincit tasmāt tīkṣṇataram mṛduh.*
  4. *Akrodhena jayet krodham asadhum sadhuna jayet  
jayet kadaryam danena Satyenalika vadinam*
  5. *Ahimsa paramo dharmah ahimsa paramam tapah,  
Ahimsa paramam satyam, tato dharmah pravartate.*

## 15. The Wisdom of the Vedas

THE ANCESTRAL wisdom of India is the Vedas. The bulk of the document is the record of the direct vision of the inspired sages and seers of India arising from their spiritual experience. The Vedas are called the *sruti*, which means what is heard. The seers are described as those who saw in the flashes of their intuition the hymns (*mantradrasta*). The traditional view about the Vedas affirms its eternality (*nityatva*) and its self-existent nature (*apauruseya*). According to the *astika darsanas*, on whose authority the systems are based, the Vedas have no author at all. Further it is also held that the import of the Vedas cannot be known by any other (*pramanas*) instruments of knowledge, such as perception, inference, analogy, implication etc.<sup>1</sup> Nor is there any possibility of its coming into conflict with other forms of experience obtained through perception and inference, for by hypothesis it refers only to matters beyond this life and is, therefore, empirically unverifiable. It is possible, though, that the vedic truths, while not contradicting common experience, may still exhibit discrepancies in their own teaching. Such possible discrepancies are removed by the elaborate application of the determinative marks of purport (*tatparyalingas*) and rules of interpretation laid down in detail in the *purva-mimamsa*. The Mimamsa asserts that the vedic texts are in a fixed permanent order. The fixed order (*anupurvi*) is permanent. The idolatry of scripture is a unique feature of the Indian thought. Patanjali in his commentary on Panini's grammar makes a very significant remark: "Is it not said that the Vedas were not composed but

---

1. *Aprapte sastraṁ pramāṇam—Jaimini's sūtra.*



are eternal? Quite so; it is *their sense that is so*, not the order of the syllables in them".<sup>2</sup>

With the exception of Sankara, the other two schools of Vedanta, Ramanuja and Madhva regard the entire Veda as authoritative. They do not regard the *Samhita* portion as secondary and as only dealing with *Karma* and *devatas*. They do not agree to the view that it is devoid of any philosophical content. They do not admit that there is any break in the Upanishadic thought from the earlier portions. The Veda is one whole for them. It does not admit of any division in its importance. The theistic schools of Vedanta oppose the division of Veda into the *Karma-kanda* and the *Upanishad*.

The Vedas go into four parts: 1. *mantras* i.e. the *Samhita* portion. These are magnificent chants of the inspired seers (vedic *risis*) outpouring their vision. The hymns are carefully selected, arranged and conserved in a standard, exhibiting an accented pattern, handed down from generation to generation by oral transmission. These hymns are without a shadow of doubt the oldest book of the Aryan family of nations. 2. The *mantras* are followed by the *Brahmana*. They are treatises, in prose, sometimes monotonous, that seek to give instructions regarding the details and the way several sacrifices are to be performed. The third and the fourth portions, *Aranyakas* and *Upanishads*, deal about spiritual truth and the way to attain them. They represent the essential philosophical quest of India.

The present paper is confined to the examination of the philosophical ideas contained in the *Samhitas* and *Brahmanas*. The four Vedas—Rg, Yajus, Sama and Atharva—are the richest, brightest, most magnificent heritage of the Hindus; they embody all their wisdom, poetry, metaphysics, mysticism. Hence they are regarded and held by posterity in profound veneration.

Scholarly researches have disclosed different points of view from which the Vedas are examined. A few orientalists have studied the Vedas from the linguistic and philosophical points of view. Students of history are interested in the Vedas for the study of the growth and life of men and their civilizations. Some look upon the Vedas as a form of literature. The view sought to be pursued in this paper is purely philosophical. I have

---

2. *Maha-Bhasya* IV-III-101.



relied for this approach on the teachers and the Masters of Vedanta. To the student of Indian culture and philosophy the message of the Vedas is the essential message of India.

There is a popular and attractive interpretation of the Vedas as a form of pure Naturalism. The human beings sought the favour of several deities—*Varuna*, *Indra*, *Agni*, for progeny, prosperity and defence. Nature was conceived as being presided over by several powers. Each of them was personalized. Each god had his days and passed his power on to others. Men sought to placate the deities and feared them. The world of the Vedas is described by some as a form of wild polytheism and crude Naturalism. Others describe it as a form of Henotheism, where each god took his turn, had his days and passed on his power to others. Yet others saw in it the form of arrested anthropomorphism.

It is difficult for us to share all these views. We can see the steady development of a philosophical system in the Vedas. One such attempt is the monistic view. If we adopt that line of interpretation, we see different stages and a development of them in the Vedas. In all we see *six different stages*. The *first stage* discloses the concepts of different deities presented after the human model. Each is in charge of a particular phenomenon of Nature—*Varuna*, *Agni* and *Indra*. The *second stage* is the conception of the *virat purusa* described in the grand manner in the *Purusa Sukta*. He has a thousand heads, feet, hands. He is represented as the creator of all. The *third way* in which ultimate Reality is described is as the immanent principle. This is not pantheism, for God is not exhausted in the equation to the world. He is transcendent also. God minus the world is still God and not zero. It is panen-theos. It is God in all and not all in God. The *fourth way* describes the deities as abstract divinities, as protector, creator.

The *fifth way*, the conception of ultimate Reality, is equated with a moral principle that is inviolate. In the *sixth way* we have the celebrated *Nasadiya Sukta*, which dimly anticipates the central conception of the Absolute or *Brahman* of Advaita vedanta. It is considered as the flower of Indian thought. Here the vedic vision lights upon the concept of the Absolute. Deussen writes in appreciation of the hymn as follows, "That is possibly the most admirable bit of philosophy of old times. Here we



get the first flash of the conception of an indeterminate Absolute underlying all existence, Primal One from which everything originates, which cannot be described either as existent or non-existent. Here we are on the threshold of the monism of Sankara. By the word *tad ekam* this hymn indicates the unitary character of the ultimate principle. The problem of causality and the nature of causality are tackled here. The opposites being non-being, death and life, good and evil are viewed as developing within and, hence, are reconcilable in the fundamental principle. Creation is not attributed here to any external agency. It is highly impersonal and there is no theistic colour here."

The followers of the monistic school discuss the progress of the monistic vision in Vedas. There is no doubt that in the vedic pantheon there are many gods, e.g. *Indra*, *Varuna*, *Agni*, *Mitra* etc. This does not mean that vedic philosophy represents a crude Naturalism or a wild polytheism. The different gods are all manifestations of one Reality. The Vedas declare: "The truth is one, sages call it by various names (*ekam sat vipra bahudha vadanti*). Though the Vedas declare Reality as one, it immediately adds in a spirit of toleration: "It is called by various names". It is also stated: "The one that exists is conceived in many ways (*ekam santam bahudha kalpayanti*). The one glory shines in many forms (*ekam jyoti bahudha vibatti*)." The vedic seers had a united vision. They were opposed to the concept of a *unipersonal manifestation* of God. This is one way of seeking unity in the message of the Vedas.

The speculation of the vedic seers does not admit that an accidentalism governs the process of the world, nor is it a kind of materialism or naturalism. They definitely seek a rule of law that not only governs the universe, but is also reflected in the life of man. There is at bottom a search after the explanation of observed facts implying a belief that every event has a cause.

The rule of law is the conception or *rta*. This finds a prominent place in the *mantras*. This word originally meant uniformity of nature or alternation of day and night, while in the *mantras* it not only bears this significance but also the additional one of "moral order". Man is regarded as an aspect and expression of *rta*, has within him a reflection thereof. That is the *karma* doctrine. The discovery of the cosmic order (*rta*) is a profound insight. Adolf Kaegi writes: "The external ordinances



of the rulers of the world were as inviolable in mental and moral matters as in the realm of nature." That human conduct illustrates order is indeed an important conception that paved the way for the furtherance of the ethical thought and the affirmation and the freedom of human will.

The vedic seers were aware of the distinction between the soul and the body. They spoke of the combination as man. They were aware of the animal nature of man. They said man is a beast (*pasu*), more specifically a biped (*dvipad*). "He is praised as the king of the beasts and as the first among the beasts." The material output of man is the body. In the *Yajurveda* we have a long list of the bodily organs described, e.g. head (*sirah*), face (*mukham*), hair of the head (*kesa*), facial hair (*smasru*) etc.

Life is indicated in the vedic literature by two terms *asu*, an abstract vital principle and *prana*, an actual vital process. Men are described as possessors of *asu*. It is responsible for raising us up, enlivening and lighting up our den of darkness. The *asu* is distinct from body. Passages in the Vedas indicate the supremacy of man, and connect him with nature and gods.

A superficial study of the Vedas discloses that men sing the praise of a number of vedic gods—*Indra*, *Varuna*, *Agni*, *Visva-devah*, *Adita*, the neuter *tad ekam*. They ask for wealth, progressing strength of limbs, length of life.

*Indra* is glorified in a number of hymns and his favourite *soma* drink is offered to him. *Indra* is described as follows: "Without whom men do not conquer, whom they, when fighting, call on for help; who has been a match for everyone, who moves the immovable".

*Varuna* is another major god. He is the guardian of the moral and physical order. He was entrusted with the function of keeping the law. He is described as *rtasya gopa*. *Rta* meant both the regulated order of seasons and the law of moral conduct. Men prayed to *Varuna* for forgiveness of their sins. A typical prayer is: "I ask, O *Varuna*, wishing to know this my sin: I go to ask the wise, the sages all tell me: *Varuna* it is who is angry with thee. Was it for an old sin, O *Varuna*, that thou wantest to destroy thy friends who always praise Thee? Tell me, thou unconquerable Lord, and I will quickly turn to Thee for praise, freed from sins. Absolve us from the sins of the fathers, and from those which we have committed with our own



bodies. It is not in our doing, *Varuna*, it was sleep, an intoxicating draught, passion, dice, thoughtlessness."

Agni is praised as intelligence. "O Agni, the worship and the sacrifice thou encompassed on every side, that same goes to God. May Agni the invoker of wise intelligence, the true of the most brilliant fame, the god, come with gods."

The theistic interpreters have found the hierarchy of deities to be headed by Visnu. They look upon him as the ultimate Reality. We find enough room in the Vedas to sustain a full-blooded theism and also dim hints of an absolutism.

Among the ancient acaryas Sri Madhva was the first to formulate an *adhyatmic* interpretation of the Vedas in his *Rg bhasya* of forty *suktas*. He tries to interpret all the terms as having their plenary significance in respect of Narayana. He uses etymology to great purpose. He effects a harmonization of all the texts and does not relegate the *mantra* portions to the region of *karmakanda* as some do. He finds an inviolable principle of interpretation to demonstrate the running unity among the passages of the vedic *mantras*. This can be called the *arsa* tradition of vedic interpretation. It has esoteric significance.

Among the moderns Sri Aurobindo stands out as the unique interpreter of the Vedas. He is of opinion that the Vedas are replete with the suggestion of secret doctrines and mystic philosophies. He looks upon the gods of the hymns as symbols of psychological functions. For example, Surya signifies *intelligence*, Agni *will*, and Soma *feeling*. The Vedas are to him a mystery religion corresponding to the Orphic and Eleucian creeds of ancient Greece. Sri Aurobindo laments that we have lost the original secret of the Vedas. He has recaptured it for us in his interpretation.

The Vedas have meant all things to Hindus. In the words of Manu, it is the root of all Dharma. It is of great interest to note that the vedic civilization was not a lopsided one. Its philosophic thought and ideals of life are neither other-worldly nor merely materialistic. It discloses a type of *theocentric* humanism which is at once spiritual and ethical.

The qualities of life that make for *yoga* (preserving what we have achieved) and *ksema* (obtaining what we wish for) which is collectively called progress, are stressed. Unity and integration with a view to securing a union of purposes is upheld. What

is asked for is not a unanimity, but a colourful unity of interests. The celebrated hymn calls for unity of men and their goals to secure world welfare and happiness for all.

Meet together, talk together,  
May your minds comprehend alike,  
Common be your action and achievement,  
Common be your thoughts and intentions,  
Common be the wishes of your heart,  
So there may be thorough union among you.

—*Rg Veda*, VIII—8.49.



## 16. *The Quest of the Upanishads*

THE UPANISHADS constitute the concluding portion of the Vedas and hence are described as Vedanta. They represent the quintessence of the Vedas and embody the metaphysical doctrines and spiritual visions of the ancient seers and sages of India. They outline the path to spiritual realization.

The term Upanishad is interpreted in different ways: (1) to sit close by devotedly (Upanishad, i.e. *sad upani*), (2) secret doctrine (*guhya-adesah*), (3) the term refers to the key passages in the Upanishads. According to Sankara it is that which destroys ignorance and leads to Brahman.

Sankara regards his Vedanta as a garland of the Upanishadic sentences. It is taught by illumined teachers to spiritual aspirants who have given evidence of their earnestness. It is not a free broadcasting of truth to one and all.

In point of popularity it is only second to the Gita. It is said that Schopenhauer had the Latin text of the Upanishads on his table and was in the habit before going to bed of performing his ablutions from its pages.

He writes: "From every sentence (of the Upanishads) deep original and sublime thoughts arise, and the whole is pervaded by a high and holy and earnest spirit. In the whole world . . . there is no study . . . so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishads. They are the products of the highest wisdom. They are destined sooner or later to become the faith of the people."

Max Muller compares the philosophy of the Upanishads to the light of the morning and to the pure air of the mountains—so simple, and so true, if once understood.

In Deussen's words the Upanishads have tackled every fundamental problem of life. They have given us an intimate account of Reality. W. B. Yeats observes, "nothing that has disturbed the schools to controversy escaped their notice."

Swami Vivekananda had all the inspiration for his teaching in the Upanishads. He declared: "Let me tell you we want strength, and the Upanishads are a great source of strength. Therein lies power to invigorate the whole world. They call with trumpet voices upon the weak, the miserable, the down-trodden of all races, all creeds and sects, to stand on their feet and be free; freedom, physical freedom, mental freedom and spiritual freedom are the watch-words of the Upanishads. The truth of the Upanishads are before you, take them up, live up to them and the salvation of India will be at hand."

John Eglinton describes the influence of the Upanishads and the Gita<sup>1</sup>, "Goethe, Wordsworth, Emerson and Thoreau among moderns have something of this vitality and wisdom, but we can find all they have said and much more in the grand sacred books of the East. The Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads contain such godlike fullness of wisdom on all things that I feel the authors must have looked with calm remembrance back through a thousand passionate lives, full of feverish strife for and with shadows ere they could have written with such certainty of things which the soul feels to be sure."

There are as many as two hundred Upanishads. But all of them are not authentic; nor are all of them of equal importance and significance. Ten of them are accepted as authoritative. They are commented on by the founders of the schools of Vedanta. They are *Isa*, *Kena*, *Katha*, *Prashna*, *Mundaka*, *Man-dukya*, *Taittiriya*, *Aitareya*, *Chandogya*, *Brihadaranyaka*. Most of the Upanishads are pre-Buddhist. They roughly belong to the sixth century B.C.

The Upanishads are not all alike. They differ in their length and methods of exposition. Some are only a few verses and others are very long. Some are in verse and some are in prose. Yet others combine both.

In style and manner also, they differ widely. Sometimes we have simple, concrete narrative, sometimes abstract metaphysical

1. John Eglinton, *Memoir A.E.*, p. 20.



speculation. We have long argumentative dialogues. The tone of the Upanishads also fluctuates. There is, in some passages high seriousness and in others homely humour and in some others innumerable analogies.

The devout Hindus believe that all the Upanishads are spiritual and embody a definite outlook. Mahatma Gandhi writes, commenting on the first verse of the *Isavasya*: "I have now come to the final conclusion that if all the Upanishads and all the other scriptures happened, all of a sudden, to be reduced to ashes, and if only the first verse of the *Isopanishad* were left in tact in the memory of the Hindus, Hinduism would live for ever."

The quest of the Upanishadic seers is a deep and earnest one. They feel the urgency of the task as the most important in life. The quest is the result of the reflective consciousness of man and his sense of personal freedom. The unique nature of man is his eligibility for knowledge and action (*Jnana karma adhikarat*). Man is more than what he knows himself to be. He rises to the essential human life when he acts on his choice, guided by ends which he conceives as worthy of his attainment. So long as he is governed by his reflexes or conditioned by them, or propelled by his instincts, he is still at the animal level. When he rises to the level of rational thinking he conceives different ends or values and seeks to achieve them by the determination of his will and overcomes the opposition to them arising from his unregenerate instincts and emotions.

Most of the values are not actually achieved and are not always easy to attain. Even at the rational level man is guided by utility and seeks to live a life of enlightened self-interest and calls it the ethical theory of utilitarianism. The reflective consciousness of man plunges him into an earnest investigation of the different ends of life, e.g. wealth, sex, fame, a life of ease, valour, and this "*vichara*" yields the right discrimination between the unreal and the Real. It is expressed in the celebrated prayer, "from the unreal lead me to the Real, from darkness lead me to Light, from death lead me to Immortality."<sup>2</sup>

The knowledge of the Real is declared to be comprehensive of all. It is called *para-vidya* (supreme knowledge). The quest is for that knowing in which all other things become known.<sup>3</sup> It

2. *Brihadaranyaka* I 3.28.

3. *Mundaka* I—1-3.



is that knowledge by knowing which what is unheard becomes heard, what is not perceived becomes perceived, what is unknown becomes known.<sup>4</sup>

This divine ancient wisdom of the Upanishad is further described as the Infinite. The infinite is happiness. There is no happiness in the finite, so one must desire to obtain the infinite.<sup>5</sup> The Real is not only an object of mere importance. Its knowledge and realization dispels all our doubts and disbeliefs and ends our tensions and strifes<sup>6</sup> and vouchsafes unexcellible bliss from which there is no return to the world of change and sorrow.

The Isa asks the question what delusion, what sorrow can there be to him who has the vision of unity?<sup>7</sup> Narada approaches Sanatkumara for such instruction which puts an end to all sorrow: "Venerable Sir, I know only the texts. It has been heard by me from those like you that he who knows the self crosses over sorrow."<sup>8</sup>

The knowledge of the Real frees us from all fear and secures for us bliss.<sup>9</sup> The knowledge and spiritual realization of the Real results in the transformation of our selves into the Real. It enables us to overcome our sorrow and sins.<sup>10</sup>

The Upanishads declare that this quest of the Infinite is the supreme end of life. It describes the Infinite in condensed statement. "It is the soul of truth, the anchor of life, the delight of the mind and the fullness of peace and eternity."<sup>11</sup>

This quest of the infinite is relentlessly and perseveringly carried out by the aspirant as a result of his conscious choice. This he does as a result of his discriminative sense, *viveka*. This sense enables him to assess the evanescent nature of finite values and their drawbacks. The aspirant gets his 'discriminative sense' through the instruction and initiation of the *guru* who has himself realized the Infinite. The *guru* represents the living voice that transmutes the aspirant. Commenting on a particular passage in the Upanishads, Sankara observes "that even one well

4. *Chandogya* VI—1-3.

5. Ch. VII—23-1.

6. *Mundaka* II—2-9.

7. V—7.

8. *Tarati sokam*, Chand. VII—1-3.

9. *Taittiriya*, II—4-1.

10. *Mundakya*, II—2-9.

11. *Taittiriya* 1-6.



versed in the scriptures should not set about seeking the knowledge of the Infinite by himself." Going to the *guru* is no mere formality, nor an evasion of one's responsibility. It is a necessity. "He who has a *guru* knows," declares the Chandogya. The quest of the Upanishads is for that Infinite which is one, secondless, eternal and is the Absolute Reality.

The Absolute Reality is also unconditioned existence (*chit*) and unexcellable bliss (*ananda*) and perfection (*ananta*). It cannot be known directly like any finite objects through the methods of discursive reason. It is beyond the reach of words and the comprehension of the mind. Though it cannot be known by reason, it can be realized by spiritual experience (*sakshatkara*). It vivifies all that is there in the world. The discriminating students of spiritual life find that no finite pleasure can give us knowledge of the Infinite.

Nachiketas turns down the glittering offers of Yama, the women, wealth and long life as transient and trifling and sticks to his boon for the knowledge of the Infinite.

Maitreyi exclaims that she has no use for that wealth which cannot secure her immortality. The knowledge of the Infinite is sought for its excellence and for its power of ending all sorrows.

The Upanishads look at enlightenment as the chief means (*jnana*) of Brahman realization. They do not regard ritual and performance of ceremonies as methods for the attainment of *moksha*. The Mundaka declares: "Unsafe are the boats of sacrifice to go to the farthest shore; unsafe are the eighteen books where the lower actions are explained." "Imagining that ritual and charity as the final good, the unwise see not the path supreme. Indeed they have in high heaven the reward for their pious actions; but thence they fall and come to earth or even down to lower regions." "These men, abiding in the midst of ignorance, but thinking themselves wise and learned, like fools aimlessly go hither and thither, like blind led by blind." The Upanishad declares that there is no other way than the realization of knowing of the Infinite to end our sorrows.<sup>12</sup>

Equally emphatic is the Upanishad on the need for ethical excellence for the spiritual aspirant. In every one of the Upanishads the need for self-control and integration of human personality is stressed. That is the first step which can never be by-

---

12. *Svetasvatara*, III.8.



passed. The Katha asks the aspirant to direct the senses to look in and divert them from their natural way of looking outward. The Upanishad pleads for yoking the senses to spiritual aim. The need for ethical life is imperative. "Those who have not refrained from wickedness, the unrestrained, the unmeditative nor one who has no peace of mind can never attain the Infinite even by knowledge."<sup>13</sup>

Taking the Upanishads as a whole we find that there are at least two different ways of looking at the Infinite. One of the trends describes Brahman as a homogeneous noncomposite consciousness that is, perfection without a second. It is negatively described as *neti-neti* and the finite has no place in it. It is described as unlike all that we know. The world of matter and souls are described as its appearance. Even this appearance is traced to Brahman, without affecting its purity. There is no other Reality than Brahman. Hence everything is traced to it. The relation between Brahman and other appearances is one-sided. The appearance is dependent on Brahman, but Brahman is in no way touched by the impurities of appearance. The Upanishads lend support to such a view also.<sup>14</sup> Sankara develops this line of thought and regards the world as an appearance, i.e. dependent for its existence on Brahman; viewed independently of Brahman, it has no status. That is all the meaning of *maya*. The Upanishadic seers trace all that exists to Brahman. They do not admit that the existence of the world of things or human experience is an inexplicable datum. Nor do they admit that the universe is self-complete. They examine in turn several phenomena as the proposed root causes of the world, e.g. Time, Nature, Necessity, Chance, the Elements, etc., and find all of them unsatisfactory. So they posit the infinite spirit as the cosmic principle to account for the universe. They examine the psychic principles and submit them to intense analysis. This is explained in the celebrated dialogues between Prajapati on the one hand, Indra and Virochana on the other<sup>15</sup> and between Brigu and Varuni.<sup>16</sup> The individual soul's essence is neither the body, nor a bundle of qualities, nor is it a mere state of mind. It is of the

13. *Katha*, II.24.

14. See *Chandogya*, VI.

15. Ch. VIII, 3 to 12.

16. *Taittiriya*, III.



same essence as Brahman. The Upanishads, according to Sankara, adopt the "synthetic" method and establish the identity of the individual soul with Brahman. The principle underlying the world as a whole and that which forms the essence of man are ultimately the same. This explicit identification is declared in the celebrated words of Uddalaka to his son a number of times. "All that is, is of the nature of the Self. That is the Truth. That thou art."

This identification of the self and Brahman, according to some Upanishads, is not attained in another life. Such an experience is possible here and now. This is the famous doctrine of *jivan-mukti* referred to by Sankara. In the Upanishads also, we find the support for Sankara's doctrine of *Renunciation*. *Vairagya* is praised and also advocated as the sovereign method for spiritual realization. The triad suggested by Sankara is *vichara*, *viveka* and *vairagya*.

Among European scholars Dr Deussen holds the view that the prevailing doctrines of the Upanishads are illusionism and pantheism.

But our modern scholars have differed from Sankara in their interpretation of the Upanishads. They all hold to monism, but are not reconciled to the view that the world is an illusion. They have interpreted the nature of Brahman in a different manner. They declare that the Infinite does not exclude the finite. The universe is rooted in it. The Infinite is the Real of the real. It is in all. All this is Brahman. The world is the moving image of eternity. The moving image does not hide the Eternity behind it. It gives us glimpses of the Eternal. Poet Tagore goes farther than this, and declares that the world is a manifestation of the Infinite. It is *Lila vada* and not *Maya vada*. The Infinite is not a bare abstraction. It is a rich harmonious system which contains all. It reconciles all opposites. It is in one phase dynamic, and in another aspect it is static. The logical difficulties of synthesizing contradictions made Sankara describe the Infinite as devoid of any determination or action. Modern commentators declare that there is a special logic of the Infinite. The *saprapancha* view establishes an organic connection between the Infinite and the world. There are several passages in the Upanishads that declare that Brahman transforms himself into the world of things and he is also the material cause of the world.



"As the spider emits and withdraws the web, as herbs sprout out on earth, and as hair grows on the head and body of man—so from the eternal Infinite springs this universe."<sup>17</sup> The Infinite is immanent as well as transcendent. In the *Brihadaranyaka* the concept of the Lord as the inner ruler (*antaryamin*) is developed and described at large. Activity is attributed to the Infinite as entering the souls and things of men. The spirit seeps into all that is there in the universe. But for the presence of the spirit, the emergence of life from inorganic matter, of human consciousness from animal life, from the human to the divine is not possible. It is the presence of the spirit that makes evolution possible.

The individual soul is represented as a friend to the Infinite. He is to dedicate himself to the Lord. The doctrine of self-surrender or *bhakti* as found in the Gita is not so prominent in the Upanishads. We have mention of several contemplative disciplines (*Upasanas*) to reach the fellowship of the Lord. The Infinite is also described as a supreme auspicious personality. There are very few passages that declare that the Lord's grace is the only means for spiritual realization. We have a passage in *Katha*, "The *atman* cannot be attained by the study of the Vedas, nor by intellect, nor even by much learning, etc." This passage is interpreted so as to yield the Advaitic sense. In the *Svetasvatara* Upanishad we have the *bhakti* element predominantly. Ramanuja finds support for his doctrine in the nature of the Infinite as dynamic and as transforming itself into the things of the world. It is difficult to be dogmatic and say that the Upanishads all speak of one view only.

Dr Radhakrishnan has done a great deal in establishing the positive interpretation; of the nature of the Infinite in the Upanishads. In his profound introduction to the text and English translation and notes of the Upanishads and his articles,<sup>18</sup> he describes the Infinite not as an abstract formal principle but as an active universal consciousness. It is the unity of the finite and infinite. "It exists both in itself and for itself", as Hegel puts it. "The Absolute, is the fullest, concrete and most real Being." It is the living dynamic spirit, the source and the container of the infinitely varied forms of Reality. It is the spiritual spring which

17. *Mundakya* I, 1.7.

18. *The Indian Philosophical Review*, Vol. III, No. 3.



breaks, blossoms and differentiates itself into a number of finite centres. It is not mere knowledge or power or action. It is the living unity of essence and existence.

The positive view of the Infinite and the view that the world is not an illusion is supported by scholars like Dr Bhandarkar who writes, "that the opinion expressed by some eminent scholars that the burden of the Upanishadic teaching is the illusive character of the world and the reality of one soul only is manifestly wrong, and, I may even say, is indicative of an uncritical judgment."

Professor Hopkins puts a question and answers it: "Is there anything in the early Upanishads to show that the authors believed in the objective world being an illusion? The answer is nothing at all."

The Upanishads have influenced Indian philosophical thought not only in ancient India but also in our day. They represent the spiritual treasure of India.

## 17. *Srimad Bhagavata*

THE BHAGAVATA is fried in the butter of *jnana* (knowledge) and soaked in the honey of love (*bhakti*).

—Sri Ramakrishna

Once while Ramakrishna was listening to a reading of the Bhagavata, he saw a beam of light, 'like a cord' come forth from Krishna's feet and touch the sacred book. Then the beam touched Ramakrishna's heart and remained visible to him for some time, as a triangle connecting Krishna, the Bhagavata and himself. "From this I learned," Ramakrishna used to say, "that Bhagavata, Bhakta and Bhagavan are one and the same."

*Vedanta and the West*, No. 146, pages 46-47

—Christopher Isherwood

The Bhagavata purana is the most adored and widely read of the eighteen puranas of the celebrated sage Vyasa. Its popularity is only second to that of the Bhagavad Gita. The puranas have played a very significant role, along with the epics, in the dissemination of the philosophical and religious ideas of Hinduism to the vast multitude who have no scholarly equipment to read the difficult Sastras. The puranas with plenty of stories and descriptions, in an easy style, reinforce the Hindu way of life and its virtues. The spread of Hindu Dharma is most effectively carried on by puranas through the medium of the concrete stories.

Among the puranas, the most philosophical and deeply moving is the Bhagavata. Its style is difficult and the construction of the verses baffles even the pandits. It has in it long prose pas-



sages also. It consists of 18,000 granthas divided into twelve books called Skandhas. The fascinating deeds and marvellous acts of Sri Krishna, the adored avatara of the Hindus, is the theme of the tenth book. Generations of readers of the Bhagavata have found spiritual repose, infinite devotion, discerning detachment and above all a perfect spiritual satisfaction in reading this great book. It is described as the lamp of wisdom (*adhyatma dipam*). Its verses and words are direct, most powerful and uncompromising. It does not mince matters. The Bhagavata, in its task of imparting the three spiritual values, *Jnana*, *Bhakti* and *Vairagya*, uses all the methods of persuasion. At times Vyasa denounces men, for their foolish ways, he frightens them, he advises them as a friend, and he also pities them. By innumerable methods of appeal he leads men into the acceptance of the spiritual values. It is 'unashamedly didactic.' The venerable sage Vyasa, after writing the great work Mahabharata, the encyclopedia of morals and religion, did not feel satisfied. He also classified the Vedas into different branches. All these good acts did not bring a sense of fulfilment for Vyasa. He was sitting sadly and the divine sage Narada accosted him. Vyasa asked Narada the cause for his dissatisfaction even after having written the giant works. Narada exhorted Vyasa 'to compose a purana that is exclusively devoted to the singing of the glory of Lord's exploits, manifestations and teachings to His devotees.' The book deals about this great theme. It celebrates the glory of the Bhagavan and His followers the Bhagavatas.

Ah! ye men of the world who have taste and imagination, imbibe this delectable juice of the Bhagavata mixed with flowing nectar, the fruit which has through the parrot (Suka) dropped from the tree of the Vedas! Imbibe it till you become absorbed in the supreme being.

The Bhagavata purana was taught by Vyasa to his son Suka, and Suka in his turn taught it to Parikshit. Once Parikshit went out for hunting and was thirsty, so he entered the hermitage of a sage and asked for water. The sage was absorbed in deep meditation and did not heed the words of the king. The king was annoyed with the sage, so he took up the dead snake from the floor and put it round the neck of the sage and returned home.



The sage's son saw the disrespect shown to his father on his return home, and cursed the king to die of snake-bite in seven days. Parikshit came to know of this. He resolutely prepared to spend the seven days in devotion to the Lord. He erected a small island-like stage in the mighty Ganges and took refuge in the Lord. The great sage Suka came to the spot by chance and relieved the agony of the king by comforting him that seven days are enough for one to attain *moksha*, if one can listen to the Bhagavata. He then poured out the message of the great book he had learnt from his father to the austere and dedicated prince.

The two figures of the Bhagavata are not merely fascinating like Krishna and Arjuna, but they are awe-inspiring in their unconquerable and superhuman detachment from the glamour and glitters of the world of *samsara*. It is said of Suka that he left home very early in life in quest of Brahman. 'The great Vyasa pained by the separation from his son, ran out calling him loudly by his name; the trees of the forest reverberated, yes, yes; we bow down to the sage, who is seated in the heart of all.' Sage Suka is the embodiment of spiritual perfection. He was free from the lust of flesh and was full of spiritual glory. He is often described as 'Suka Brahma'. He did not adorn or cover his body with any trappings. He moved about the world imparting spiritual wisdom to all. He would halt in no place for a long time. It was the good luck of Parikshit to get such a *guru*.

Parikshit himself is not an ordinary prince. He was the last of the Pandava clan. When he was in Uttara's (i.e., Abhimanyu's wife) person the terrific arrow of Aswatthama assailed him. Uttara ran for rescue to Krishna asking him to protect the baby in her, and was not mindful of her own life. The Lord with his Chakra protected the child in the womb. The child was seeking to know this universal protector from that time onwards. This is the reason for Parikshit being called Vishnu-rat, the one protected by Vishnu. The term Parikshit also means one who discerns and examines things. There is not a greater occasion, a nobler teacher, a more devoted disciple than those that combine to give us the Bhagavata.

The theme of the Bhagavata is the exclusive, and splendid treatment of man's need for God-love, and the ways to attain it. In one verse, the author of the purana proclaims:



The scriptures after a good deal of adequate examination find, that man's chief good lies in two things: (1) complete detachment to things, other than the spirit and (2) steady absorption in the bliss of the indeterminate Brahman.

In the language of the Bible, it is Christ's exhortation:

Seek ye the kingdom of God and all other things will be added unto you.

The Bhagavata laments that we men, seek all other things, wealth, fame, name, women, glory, etc., and forget the Kingdom of God. Men in their quest for false happiness spare no efforts. When glory of riches and lust of the flesh and fame rise before them, long suffering, endurance and opposing dangers men count as nothing. Fenelon observes:

There is nothing that men do not prefer to God, a tiresome detail of business, an occupation utterly pernicious to health, the employment of time in ways one does not dare to mention—anything rather than God.

To the passion-blind men who are enmeshed in their world of sense-delights, the Bhagavata makes a stirring appeal.

Who on earth, other than the animal will be indifferent to the splendid exploits of the Lord, the delight of audience cherished by those who have turned their souls away from the perishing sense-objects. Who again, in this world of ours, that has the knowledge of the essence of the aspirations of men (*purushartha saravit*) will cease to listen to the glory of the Lord after having feasted his ear once on it, unless he is non-human species.

The Bhagavata describes the effect of listening to the Lord's Glory.

He who hears, remembers constantly, meditates the auspicious manifestations of the Lord, and immerses his mind in the Lotus-like feet of the Lord (*caranara vindayor avistacitta*) is saved from samsara, i.e. the cycle of births and deaths.

Further,

He who has once at least immersed his mind in the Lotus-like feet of the Lord and is absorbed in His divine characteristics, shorn of all sins, never sees in his dream the servants of the Lord of death with their ropes.

Describing the greatness of the Bhagavata, Vyasa writes:

The Bhagavata purana composed by the great sage Vyasa, imparts the knowledge of dharma which has no worldly purpose and interest, which is read by men who have no egoism. It is auspicious. It is the Eternal Reality that destroys our threefold suffering (*tapatrayonmulam*).

The love of the Lord otherwise called Bhakti alone can help us to withstand the temptations of life that assail us. Reflective wisdom (*Viveka*) enable us to sift the nature and merit of the goods of life. Unregenerate and sense-bound life makes us run after the simple, charming goods of life. The author of the Bhagavata singles out women (*Vanita*) and wealth (*Vittam*) as two great all-absorbing distractions of life!

The desires of the senses draw us hither and thither, but when the hour is past, what do they bring us, but remorse of conscience and dissipation of the spirit.

The author of the Bhagavata finds in God-love the solution for all our troubles. For us to acquire detachment, the certain method is God. The more intense our love for God, the farther away we go from sensual attachment. Mere withdrawal is impossible for man. The best aid for the inculcation of Bhakti in us is the company of saints or devotees (*Bhagavatas*). Their company does wonders, it transforms our unregenerate nature and orients our desires towards God. It keeps us away from the different attritions of our age. The Bhagavatas are the salt of the earth. They keep us disinfected. They are the channels of a little light dropped into this dim world of ours. A world devoid of Bhagavatas is a totally blind world. The Bhagavata purana in many places sings the glory of the Bhagavatas and describes their company as one of the greatest *sadhanas* for God-realization.



Sri Sankara has summarized this issue in a celebrated verse in his *Vivekachudamani*:

There are three things which are rare indeed and are due to the grace of God—namely, human birth, longing for liberation, and the protecting company of great souls.

The company of the Bhagavatas, cleanses our soul of its passions, lust and all kinds of defilement. Joining in their activities, listening to them quells our little desires and steadies our inconstant mind, so as to reflect from above the wisdom of the Lord.

The devotee in the Bhagavata prays:

Lord may our speech be engaged in recounting your qualities, our ears in hearing your exploits, our hands in doing service to you, our minds in the remembrance of your feet, our head in bowing to this world which is your dwelling place and our eyes in gazing at the saints who are your living images on earth.

The devotees fix their thoughts on the Lord and dedicate their lives to Him, enlightening each other, ever conversing about Him, they live contented and rejoicing in Him.

We have a very clear and detailed account of the various characteristics of a devotee. They are called the Bhagavata dharmas. The way to overcome and resist temptation is easily achieved by the act of replacement. The *anurakti*, i.e. love of God engender *Virakti* to the trifles of the world. We must fill ourselves with God-love and leave room for nothing else. An empty mind is the devil's workshop.

The religious philosophy of the Bhagavata leaves enough room for a warm personalistic theism as also for the philosophy of absolutism. A careful study of the Sastras, decidedly points to two things as ensuring the good of mankind. (1) Dispassion for things other than the *atman*, and (2) complete absorption in the *nirguna* Brahman. The Bhagavata, after proclaiming the supreme truth immediately adds in a spirit of deep humanity and



perfect psychological insight into the diversity of human temperaments.

The Bhagavata purana is the treasure-house of devotion. Bhakti is devotion to the Lord, arising from an intense love for Him. It is not the result of fear of His power. It is the attraction of His love and infinite goodness. It marks a complete irrevocable faith in Him and gives the devotee a feeling of security. It is a human emotion that is very natural to all. To love and be loved are essential for life. Bhakti enables the devotee to face all trials, tribulations, and temptations of life. He is not haunted by the feeling of loneliness in his encounters with difficulties and dangers.

Bhakti as a mode of God-realization is open to all. It is not the privileged method of a coterie. It is the broad road and the highway to God. Narada declares, "that among the devotees there is not the distinction of caste, learning, beauty, pedigree, wealth, profession." The love of the Lord is man's effort to fly from loneliness. The human heart naturally loves. In its encounter with human beings it feels that love is hurt and pained. The failures arise because man loves the perishable and the imperfect. It is but natural that the perishable and the imperfect should not satisfy man. It is at this juncture that man directs his intense longing to God, the Perfect Love.

Bhakti takes on many forms. It depends on the nature of the want and the kind of man the Bhakta is. To begin with it is the love of the resplendent form of the Lord. Bhakti in such cases is directed to a suprapersonal God who is the abode of infinite auspicious attributes. Two of the qualities of the Lord constitute the prime attraction of the devotee, His accessibility (*saulabhya*) and His infinite love or compassion (*saushilya*).

God is approached on the pattern of human relations by the Bhakta. Though God is being loved as mother, father, spouse, friend and Master, it is of a greater intensity directed to God. Further, God is conceived to be perfect and hence no possible human lapse by way of response to our love happens. The Bhagavata outlines nine forms of devotion to a suprapersonalistic God. The great boy-devotee, Prahlada describes nine forms of devotion. He declared that the best lesson, worthy to be learnt, is to learn to practise devotion to the Lord marked by nine characteristics: (1) *Sravanam*, listening, (2) *Kirtanam*, sing-



ing of the Lord, (3) *Smaranam*, constant remembrance of the Lord, (4) *Padasevanam*, worshipping Lord's feet, (5) *Arcanam*, saluting Him, (6) *Vandanam*, reverencing Him, (7) *Dasyam*, service to Him, (8) *Sakhyam*, moving with Him as a friend, (9) *Atma-nivedanam*, offering oneself to Him.

The first fundamental form of devotion is to listen to the accounts of the Lord's attributes, glory and His exploits from the lips of a Guru. Going to the Guru is not a mere convention. The tradition of the religious minded always upholds the importance and the function of the Guru. There is nothing to replace the living voice. Self-study of the scripture is not called *Sravaṇa*. Constant listening to the glory of the Lord, makes the devotee sing with full throated ease God's glories and His goodness. The devotee feels with every limb the love of the Lord. He employs all his physical senses in the service of the Lord. The great devotee Ambarisha dedicates his entire self to the Lord.

He lays down his mind at the lotus-like feet of the Lord, he puts his power of speech to the description of Lord's qualities, and His abode *Vaikuṇṭha*. With his hands he washes and cleans the abode of the Lord. He glues his ears to the listening of the glory and the gospel of the Lord. He employs his eyes in seeing the characteristic marks of the Lord, he embraces the forms of the devotees, he smells the sweet odour of the flowers offered to the Lord, he tastes the *tulasi* offered to the Lord. He moves about on his feet to the holy places of pilgrimage. He bows his head down at the feet of the Lord. His only desire is the service of the Lord, not the desire of anything else. He lives ever immersed in relishing the great qualities of God.

The devotee after listening to the glory of the Lord is deeply touched and moved by it. He lives with the God-idea. He eats, sleeps and drinks the God-idea. He, at this stage, sings loudly and, at times in groups, the glory of the Lord. This is popularly known as *Kirtana*. He remembers the Lord at all the times. He feels the pangs of separation from the Lord. He gets momentary glimpses of the Lord. He is excited at the sight of the Lord. The author of the *Bhagavata* describes this stage of the *Bhakti* vividly.



These devotees who are completely other worldly (*lokabhya*) deeply moved by the love awakened as the result of listening to the glory of the beloved Lord, laugh loudly, sob, weep and sing loudly the glory of the Lord as mad men. Some weep anxiously for the sight of the Lord, some laugh, remembering the marvellous exploits of the Lord, some recount with zest the glory of the Lord, even when no one asks them, some dance with delight, some sing loudly, some imitate the actions of the Lord, some keep silent fixing their mind in the Lord.

The devotees live the life of complete devotion employing every one of their faculties to the service of the Lord and His devotees. The nine types of devotion bring out the characteristic of Bhakti in all its phases. The love of the Lord is a complete total surrender to Him without any reserve. The ninth type of Bhakti, i.e. *atma nivedana* is the end. Bhakti must be a natural attraction of the soul to the Lord. It is not induced by the fear of the Lord, not for the considerations of His gifts. It is love asking the Lord not to 'give me' something but 'make me' yours. Bhakti is man's supreme privilege. To go without it is to rob ourselves of the greatest thing in life. Bhakti is the difficult art of the 'practice of the presence of God.' The devotee does not yield to disbelief and discouragement and does not swerve from his object of love.

The Bhagavata purana highlights the effects of Vairagya, dispassion and Bhakti in all their aspects. The detachment preached by the purana is not negative. It is positive in its nature. To the bhakta, Vairagya to other things comes naturally with the increase in his devotion. Bhakti is not a type of a morbid attachment to God, as the blind lust one has for a woman. It is not the result of *moha*. It is the result of *jnana* which is *nir-mala*, clear and immediate. *Jnana* leads to Bhakti, and Bhakti as it ripens makes us drop all the fetters of Samsara.

The story of Jadabharata illustrates the acme of Vairagya. The story of Kuchela, the acts of the Gopis of Brindavan, the love of Akrura and others illustrate the purity of God-love. The tenth skandha is the most popular part of the text. It covers a very large portion of the purana. Bhagavata is full of sincere, philosophical and memorable prayers to the Lord, e.g. of Bhisma, Dhruva, Kunti, Prahlada, Gajendra, etc. In short the Bhagavata



is the treasure-house of the three *sadhanas* of God-realization, *Jnana*, *Bhakti*, and *Vairagya*. The author of the *Bhagavata* draws us Godward by 'his rapier like thrusts at the profane sensualist who is not only unmindful of God but also of social morality.' Vyasa's biting irony does not spare the purse-proud, power-mad, passion-blind sensualists. He exposes in glaring manner the life of such men. When he talks of God-love he drops honey and describes best 'the passionless peace with which the atman confronts the world after his vision.'

## 18. *Srimad Ramayana*

IN MY approach to the study of Sri Rama's character, needless to say, I shall be treading over again the well trodden ground. Reverent admiration for Sri Rama's character is a part of the fundamental faith of every devout Hindu, be he a Saivite or a Vaisnava. Whether we look upon Rama as an avatara of Visnu or as a human being who succeeded in being a perfect exemplar of all the human virtues, we shall be compelled to confess ourselves unwearied admirers of Sri Rama's transcendental excellence. Those who look upon Sri Rama as an avatara seek, indeed to trace his perfection to his being an ad hoc human manifestation of the divine person; on the other hand, those who regard Sri Rama, as a perfect human being, seem, to my view, as also doing justice to his character, in that the perfection of his character is regarded as the result of his strenuous self-discipline, not a mere gift of the divine. However, it is perhaps fair to say that the difference between the two views seems narrower than is often thought. Human qualities in such perfection are not indeed anything but a product of the grace of the divine.

The study of Sri Rama's character has a great topical value to us Indians today and to humanity at large that lives under the shadow of the alarming nuclear developments. In our world of hectic hurry, and over-organized technocracy, we are ceasing to be human. We have no time or inclination for anything except the pleasure of the passing hour. No ideals attract us except the excitement of the moment. We live intensely in the present; we do not look before or after. We are stricken by psychic anxieties, cloven by emotional conflicts, beset by economic insecurities and are above all assailed by political doubts. We want



to fly from ourselves. Twentieth century man "encounters half-faiths, fragmentary creeds, unaesthetic arts, and doubtful political nostrums." In the words of W. B. Yeats "the best lack all conviction, and the worst are full of passionate intensity."<sup>1</sup> Men in their quest for false happiness spare no efforts, they count opposing dangers and suffering as nothing. Recent psychologists have lamented the modern man's preoccupation with sex. Men have become extremely sensitive to sex. They go quite mad in its pursuit. Sex is the fire in the blood and burns up the whole personality in man. Society and the new psychology have boosted it up and advertised it a thousand-fold.<sup>2</sup>

To us today the Ramayana has an imperative message. The poet's poet Valmiki has given us through the medium of great poetry the picture of the great man, manifesting his greatness. The Ramayana is neither old nor new. It is eternal. "Modernity is not a matter of date, but of outlook."

The classics have a very important function. It is wrong to regard that the classics are "merely guardians of the past, for they are equally the heralds of the future." They are dead if they are mechanically and unthinkingly read. When we read and ponder over the verses of the Ramayana, they re-emerge in answer to our present problem. They have the power to produce from age to age the necessary correction to men's sense of values and the conduct of life by creating the moral ideal which gives them the vision of truth.

The Ramayana of Valmiki is hailed as the first piece of great poetry and Valmiki as the first great poet. It is the *adikavya* and Valmiki is the *adikavi*. All the great poets that followed Valmiki have paid their tribute to his genius with great love and respect. Kalidasa refers to him with respect in his *Raghuvamsha*. He hails him as the sage of former times and humbly describes his role as one who makes a string of the already perforated and drilled precious stones, made ready by Valmiki. Valmiki is described by Professor Hirianna as the morning star of Indian classical poetry.

The circumstances associated with the birth of Ramayana are significant: "Valmiki, the great sage of Kosala, was thinking of describing in a worthy manner the fortunes of Rama the divine

---

1. W. B. Yeats, *The Second Coming*.

2. Sorokin, *Power and Morality and Reconstruction of Humanity*.



hero of his country. Resolving this idea in his mind he one day went as usual to the river Tamasa to perform his mid-day ablutions. But on that day it so happened that he saw in the vicinity of the river a fowler killing one of a pair of lovely birds that were disporting on the branch of a tree. The fowler singled out the male bird and brought it down with his arrow. Seeing the bird lie on the ground, in its blood, its mate began to wail in plaintive tones. The soft-hearted sage was moved to intense pity at this sight; and his grief spontaneously burst forth in the form of a Sloka which according to tradition was the first rhythmic utterance outside the old archaic language of the Vedas. Valmiki looked upon this sloka as suggesting to him the keynote of the contemplated work and under the spell of its inspiration composed his great poem—The *Ramayana* and became celebrated as the adikavi.”<sup>3</sup>

The great poet Bhavabhuti derived his inspiration for his drama *Uttara Rama Carita* from Valmiki. He regards Valmiki as the essence of poetry. Valmiki is the sage who has realized the supreme being in the form of sound. Brahma exhorts Valmiki to expound the story of Rama and crowns him as the first poet. Valmiki's *Ramayana* has made our world beautiful. That is the verdict of Bhavabhuti.

The author of the *Anargha Raghava*, Murari, raising the question as to why he again chooses to write on the same story of Rama, answers that there is no second Rama than the one created by Valmiki. He is inexhaustible in his significance. The great Ananda Vardhana who restricts the list of great poets to three heads the list with Valmiki. Further, he declares that Valmiki is the greatest among the past poets that have realized and produced great works of poetry whose essence is *dhvani*.

The *Ramayana* has inspired modern scholars in the East and the West. Sri Aurobindo Ghosh writes, “Not all perhaps can enter at once into the spirit of this masterpiece, but those who have once done so will never admit any other poem in the world as its superior.”

Sir Monier William writes, “There are in the whole range of world's literature few more charming poems than the *Ramayana*. The classical purity, the clearness and the simplicity of its style,

---

3. See M. Hiriyanna, *Sanskrit Studies*, p. 4.



the exquisite touches of rare poetic feeling with which it abounds, its graphic description of its heroic incidents and of Nature's grandest scenes, the deep acquaintance it displays with the conflicting workings and the most refined emotions of the human heart—all entitles it to rank among the most beautiful compositions that have appeared at any period in any country."

Although the Hindus, like the Greeks, have only two great Epic poems, namely, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, yet to compare these with the Iliad or the Odyssey is to compare the Indus and the Ganges rising in the snows of the world's most colossal range, swollen by numerous tributaries spreading into vast shallows or travelling into two deep divergent channels, with the streams of Attica or the mountainous torrents of Thessaly.<sup>4</sup>

Principal Griffith writes, "Nowhere else are poetry and morality so charmingly united, each elevating the other as in this really holy poem."

The immortality of the Ramayana is proclaimed by Brahma "As long as the hills endure and rivers flow, till that date Ramayana will continue to flourish."<sup>5</sup>

The personality of Sri Rama is a thoroughly integrated entity. It is a rounded personality. There is no lop-sided development in him. No God is cheated of his due and none is overpaid. All the faculties are present in their due proportions and necessary form. He was the ideal man "looked on by all alike." Valmiki has expressed the widespread total influence of Rama's greatness on all his contemporaries in a memorable verse. "He who has not seen Rama, nor he who has not been seen by Rama, stands censured not only by society but is condemned by his own self."<sup>6</sup> Rama's popularity was immense. All gazed on Him and were gratified.

The most outstanding great quality of Sri Rama's character—the quality that compels not admiration alone, but the deepest respect and the most reverent study, the quality that in itself embodies a philosophy of conduct of astounding comprehensiveness is that Rama is essentially a *dharmatman*. The term *dharmatman* is all inclusive. If one were to put the question,

4. Sri K. S. Ramaswami Sastri, *Studies in Ramayana*, p. 2.

5. *Ramayana*, 1-2, 36, 37.

6. *Ramayana*, 11-12-16.



adapting the language of the Gita what is the language of the *Dharmatman*? How does he speak, how does he sit, how does he walk? We have to read Valmiki's account for the answer. All the qualities of Rama follow his *dharmanisthata*. He is anchored in *Dharma*.

Dasaratha described Rama as the "wise elder" in the practice of *Dharma* (*dharmajyestha*). Rama subordinated the two values—possessions and passions—to the behest of *Dharma*. Rama declared to the irate Lakshmana, when he offered martial assistance to put down all opposition to him: "Human experience makes clear that the pursuit of *dharma* alone brings in its trail wealth, pleasures and all else, in the manner one attains all aspirations from the marriage with a beloved and obedient woman."<sup>7</sup> Sri Rama's beloved Sita described Rama, as the very embodiment of perfection to Anusuya, "How could one like me not bear the great love I have towards a person like Rama? He is a man of controlled senses and permanent affection and absolutely righteous—one who reveres other women as his mother."<sup>8</sup> Sita in a mood of appreciation exclaims "the evil born of desires is three-fold. They are falsehood, association with other's wives and being harmful to men without any cause of hostility. Falsehood has never been thine, nor can it ever be thine. Thou art never even in fancy guilty of going after others' wives which sin destroys all religious merit. Thou art always attracted by thy wife alone and by no other woman."<sup>9</sup> Rama believed in the practice of the concrete *dharma*. He never merely lectured or talked a lot about *Dharma*. He first of all practised *Dharma* in all his activities. He stuck to it in an unflinching manner. This attitude induced love of righteousness in his neighbours and thus he extended the rule of *Dharma*.<sup>10</sup>

Kausalya, the mother of Rama, testifies to Rama's impregnable faith in *Dharma*. In her exhortation to Rama she says, "that *Dharma* for which you have decided to undergo the task of going to the forest for fourteen years, that very same *Dharma* will protect you." Marica describes Rama as the idol of *Dharma* (*ramo vighrahan Dharma*).

7. *Ibid.*, II-21-57.

8. *Ibid.*, II-118, 3-6.

9. *Ibid.*, III-9, 3-6.

10. *Ibid.*, I, I-13-14.



Though Rama was anchored in Dharma, he did not neglect the other aspects of human life. Valmiki's presentation gives us the integrated picture of Rama's character. Rama had all the excellences that one marks of perfection.

Sri Rama's physical personality has exerted on the readers an enduring influence. His is the most auspicious resplendent form (*divya-mangala-vigraha*). He had imposing, lovely and proportionate limbs that attracted all. He is known for his pleasant personality traits. He had self-possession above all qualities (*niyata-ma*). This did not make him indifferent to others' troubles. He showed sympathy to others with a rare detachment. He loved life and indulged in desires and activities without endangering his firm stand on Dharma. He knew all the fine arts. He was a *visarada* and *vicaksana*. He had tastes and powers of discrimination. He had keen perception and correct judgement of men and things. At all times he remained unagitated with perfect poise. He spoke first to strangers and disarmed them. He always maintained an ever-pleasant countenance (*Sadaika-priya-darsana*). He was ever calm and exerted perfect self-discipline. He never insulted or spoke harshly to others. He had no love for gossip, scandal or useless little talk.

His moral qualities have inspired many heroes through all the ages. The foremost among his moral qualities are his super-human passion for Dharma (from which flow all his other qualities); serenity in the most trying circumstances, coupled with his undaunted courage to implement his moral resolve without any fuss or theatricality in the face of all odds. One has to turn to the debate between Bharata and Rama when the former begged him to go back to Ayodhya. Several clever men tried their best to confuse the issues adroitly in the mind of Rama. Some said that he should live the life of a householder and not abandon his asrama and go to forests. Others pointed out that it is not Ksatriya-dharma (the duty of king) to go to forests for a long period. He should protect his subjects and carry out the work of his father and complete it. Jabali the cunning Brahmana advises Rama not to give up the pleasant fruits of this world in favour of doubtful, unreal and unknown fruits in a life hereafter. Vasistha asks Rama on his authority to go back to Ayodhya. Rama listens to all and answers each and refutes their arguments. Any man of lesser resolve and lesser devotion to



Dharma than Rama would surely have been confounded and confused. Rama stood like a rock of ages. He did not resort to casuistry or quibbling. He followed the spirit of his father's words. He stood unassailed by anything. When Rama was being sent to the forest Dasaratha suggested to the minister that he should furnish Rama with enough goods and money to enable him to live in ease for a period of fourteen years. Kaikeyi resented and Rama said that it is not the spirit of his father's promise. The promise implies that he should live like a poor man. Rama always stuck to the spirit of a decision and did not swerve from it, under any pretext. He never slackened his resolve. When Rama was about to leave for the forest Kaikeyi felt that Rama might not do so, taking advantage of his father's state of health, and banking on the popular support he had. Rama assured the doubting Kaikeyi, letting her know his strength and stature. He said "Oh queen, I am not a materialistic worldling clinging to possessions and power. I am the equal of the sages who always uphold nothing but Dharma." The sheet-anchor of Rama's character is Dharma.

Sri Rama had an active love of truth and justice. He had an unconquerable faith in the triumph and ultimate victory of Dharma. He led an unrelenting moral life against all odds. His intellectual powers were matched to his moral earnestness. His acuteness of intellect was responsible for the probity of his conduct. He had a rare tenacity in holding on to his convictions. He never went back on his promise. He never spoke twice. His loyalty to his friends is unmatched. He never suffered injustice when he encountered it. He put it down with amazing courage. He had a judicious mind which was not swayed by the impulses of the moment or disturbed by prejudices. He weighed the pros and cons of an issue in an instant. He spoke little but when he did, it had tremendous force and effect. He had a balanced mind and an intuitive sagacity all his own. He had a profound sense of humour and a capacity for pointed remarks. We see his humour in the way he fooled Surpanakha.

When Vibhisana sought refuge with Rama, Sugriva advised Rama that he should not be taken as he had deserted his own brother, and Heaven knows what he would not do, Rama replies, "brothers are much the same everywhere, except in my household." That silenced Sugriva and put him in his place.



The character of Sri Rama was independent, critical but not cynical. He was never downcast or felt helpless. He never exhibited *dainya*. He had a wonderful power of forgiving men of their faults. When anyone spoke harshly to him, he did not retort. He expressed his sense of gratefulness even for a single act of kindness done to him by others. He never remembered even if one rendered hundreds of unkind acts. He was the prince of forgiveness. He always judged himself and his conduct by the strictest standards. He was lenient to others and condoned their lapses. He was never vindictive in his acts. Sita in a celebrated passage appeals to his sense of compassion and says, "Be they good men or bad, be they deserving of death, still they must be pardoned and treated with mercy by one claiming to be Arya. For no one is above error (*na kascinnaparadhyati*).” She uses a double negative. Compassion for all, is the general character of Rama.

Sri Rama was of easy access to all. He was a friend to all. All that lives loved to gaze on the ineffable charm, the transcendent loveliness of the radiant personality of Sri Rama. Each sought him as his ultimate refuge in distress. They saw in his abounding compassion an assurance that they will be saved. Rama never gave sway to any passion that violated Dharma. He was against the exclusive and excessive pursuit of any one value of life. Dharma helps us to restore this balance. Rama spread Dharma from personal example and not verbal propagation. He loved truth (*satya*) and lived dharma in which satya found its fulfilment.

The theistic vedanta of Ramanuja looks upon the Ramayana not merely as a great literary classic but as the sacred book of the gospel of Saranagati and prapatti. Rama the divine incarnation is described in the dhyana sloka thus “when the supreme principle which is to be understood by the vedas took shape in the person of Dasaratha’s son, the vedas transformed themselves into the words of Valmiki as the story of the Ramayana.” The Ramayana is the sacred book of self-surrender. The ideal of God-love is the supreme act of self-surrender which means weaning oneself away from all other worldly ties. Rama declares in a well-known verse “Whosoever but once in his sincerity of heart confesses ‘Oh Lord, I am thine,’ make him fearless from all.”

This is my view to those who unload themselves of all their

personal concern in the matter of their salvation. It is called prapatti in the vaisnava terminology. The doctrine of self-surrender has a redeeming simplicity, hard to beat. It is superior and more easy than bhakti. It is open to all irrespective of their creed, sex, age and merit. The Lord never probes into the merits and demerits of the suppliant. He saves the refugee with his unbounding grace. Grace is no commercial transaction. There is no bargaining here. There is no "give me and I shall give Thee." It is a spontaneous act of the Lord. The Bhakta, like Hanuman, must realize his utter nothingness. The Lord responds to it. Rama is described as the protector of all—Sarvaloka saranya. It is declared—where there is Rama, there is no fear, there is no defeat. There is victory.



## 19. *The Gospel of Gita*

SRI AUROBINDO writes, "that the greatest gospel of spiritual works ever yet given to the human race, the most perfect system of Karma-yoga known to man in the past is to be found in the Bhagavad-Gita. In that famous episode of the Mahabharata the great basic lines of Karma-Yoga are laid for all time, with incomparable mastery and the infallible eye of an assured experience. It aims at the secret of dynamic and not only static identity with the inner presence. Self-surrender is indispensable to the supra-mental change. It is through its action that dynamic identity is possible."<sup>1</sup>

The Bhagavad-Gita is an episode in the Bhishma Parva of the Mahabharata (chapters 25 to 42). The Bharata has a special place in Indian culture and religion. It is the biggest epic. It is "maha" because it is vast, it is "Bharata" because it is full of weight (*bhara*) hence, it is called Mahabharata. Further, it is stated, that "In respect of the four-fold values like *artha*, *kama*, *dharma* and *moksha*, what is here is also dealt with elsewhere, what is not here cannot be found elsewhere."

The importance of the scripture is accepted on all hands. In popularity it is second only to the Upanishad. It is the favourite scripture of the ancients as well as of the moderns. The Vedanta philosophy in all its forms accepts the Gita as one of the triple texts, i.e. source of authority for its doctrines. Hence, it is commented on by all the great acharyas—Sankara, Ramanuja, and Madhva.

The ancients have sung the praise of the Gita. The great

---

1. Sri Aurobindo, *Synthesis of the Yoga*, pp. 51-52.

Sankara declared, that "a little of the Gita will do, it is as profound as the sacred waters of Ganges. He who reads and sings the Gita, why need he toil at other sacred scriptures?" Its dramatic setting has attracted great attention. The dialogue between two of India's fascinating figures, in a critical moment heightens the value of the poem. The occasion and the personalities contribute to the importance of the theme. The American Professor Edgerton adds that the literary merit of the poem is not small, "the pithy anustub verses, the flow of the lines, the similies and metaphors—these give it a form of interest all its own."

The Gita has enjoyed a unique reputation throughout the ages. It has influenced Sanskrit literature considerably. It is mentioned in the Varaha, Skanda and Padma Puranas. Dr. V. Raghavan in one of his revealing articles gathers for us details, like the popularity of the recitation of the Gita for securing happiness, mentioned in Bana's *Kadambari*. In Kalhana's *Raja Tarangini* (v.125) it is recorded that King Avantivarman had the Gita read to him in his last hours. The Gita form of writing is very popular with us. One of our poetesses has set Mahatma Gandhi's life in the metre of the Gita.

As for the message of the Gita, we are to be cautious. One cannot escape the ancient commentators, nor can we completely trust any of them. The three distinguished ancient commentators have interpreted the Gita so as to uphold the doctrines of their system. This has led to the straining of the meaning of many verses to yield each his view. The sectarian interpretations have led to polemics and bitter criticisms among them. The language of the Gita and the flexible nature of the Sanskrit verses make different interpretations possible and to some extent plausible. But to a disinterested student, the Gita does not completely nor exclusively follow one or the other of the traditional schools of Vedanta.

It has a general outlook, which is suited to all men who have a spiritual bent of mind. It represents in the words of Aurobindo "A teaching which is universal, whatever may have been its origins. Its language, structure, combination and balancing of ideas belong neither to the temper of the sectarian teacher, nor to the spirit of a rigorous dogmatist. It is an undulating, encircling movement of ideas which is the manifestation of a vast-synthetic mind. It is the richest synthesis of Indian culture."



It is the feeling of all the modern interpreters of the Gita, e.g. Mahatma Gandhi, Tilak, Aurobindo, Radhakrishnan and others, that the Gita is a world-scripture. It is neither old nor new. It is eternal. Its influence on renascent thinkers in India is profound and is more far-reaching than any other single influence. It has guided the life and the action of our leaders. It has been the spiritual charter to all of them. It has set the moral-ideal before India. Referring to this scripture Radhakrishnan writes: "It sets forth as a tradition that which has emerged from the religious life of mankind. It is articulated by a profound seer, who sees truth in its many-sidedness and believes in its saving power. It represents not any sect of Hinduism, but Hinduism as a whole, not merely Hinduism but religion as such."<sup>2</sup> Its universality has no limit of time or space.

One important factor that strikes the student of Gita is that there is frank disagreement about the message of the Gita among ancient commentators, and that there is a striking agreement among the modern commentators on the message of the Gita. Its message is agreed to as essential to the spiritual regeneration of man and is applicable to all men and at all times. Its significance to man is spiritual and social.

Mahatma Gandhi regarded the Gita as his mother. He writes, "I lost my earthly mother who gave me birth long ago, but this eternal mother has completely filled her place by my side ever since, she has never changed, she has never failed me. When I am in difficulty or distress, I seek refuge in her bosom . . . I can declare that the Gita is ever presenting me with fresh lessons, and if somebody should tell me that it is my delusion, my reply to him would be, I should hug this delusion, as my richest treasure."

He very clearly states the Gita-message to us. "It calls upon us to dedicate ourselves, body, mind and soul to pure duty and not become mental voluptuaries at the mercy of chance desires and undisciplined impulses."

The ideal of the Gita is compressed in the two words Karma Yoga. The ideal man of the Gita is called a Yogin, and the method is described as Yoga. Spiritual regeneration of man is to be effected by Karma Yoga. Man in this world of ours does not exist in a perfect state. He is assailed by several temptations and

---

2. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavad Gita*, p. 12.



feels unnerved. He doubts and is unable to decide. He makes up his mind, but is not able to execute. His will is paralysed, his mind is confused, his vision clouded. At times he is enveloped by ignorance about the beginning and end of things. He has scientific skill and technical power but is not able to use them for social good. His advance in knowledge is marked by the deterioration in his character. He is at times a paradox to himself. He passes through several moods in a single day, and has no steady purpose. He swings between mania and depression, he is a pendulum between a tear and a joy. If he has the knowledge of ends he is unable to will them into action. If he has a firm will, he has no knowledge of ends. His possession of power is so great, that he has no knowledge and wisdom to use it aright. Scientific power has made men feel that there is no need for a faith in a God or any super-natural element. Scientific knowledge and technological powers have made men feel autonomous and self-sufficient. So they put their faith in science. Men have lost their faith, though they want to believe. This 'will to believe' makes men put their faith in strange gods such as the Nation, Ideology, Science, Art, etc. These have taken the place of God. Kingsley Martin, the ex-Editor of an intellectual Weekly 'New Statesman and Nation' writes, "Men and women are now unable to face the loneliness and aridity of the gospel of science and therefore though without any faith in religious dogmas, seek a personal religion to give them inner comfort. They do not believe, but they desire to believe. I see very clearly every day, there is no irrationality, that the will to believe cannot overcome."

The modern man in spite of his immense knowledge and astounding powers of organization is still no near to social peace or individual happiness. He is stricken by anxiety, cloven by emotional conflicts, beset by economic insecurities and assailed by political doubts, and hence, knows not his duties.

It is to such distracted men that the Gita is addressed. Arjuna (the representative man, the chosen instrument and the close companion of the Lord) on the battle-field, stands before his cousins, who have no sense of justice or love for him and are ready to kill him and deprive him of his part of the kingdom. On this historical battle-field what was at stake was the challenge to Dharma. Arjuna is not able to face the call of duty and take arms against injustice. He knows the injustice. He has not only power



but also the help of many kings to fight. All the methods of compromise have been tried out and proved of no avail. Judged by the normal standard of ordinary morality, Duryodhana and his party deserve to be killed to vindicate Dharma.

In the face of gross injustice, Arjuna, the great warrior, who knows his duty, his prowess, the justice of his cause, falters and wants to run away from the path of duty, because of sentimental feelings. He says that he is in great sorrow, that he would not see the death of his cousins. The ghastly immediate consequence of blood-shed and the death of his cousins unnerved him. He came to the battle-field to punish his wicked cousins who robbed him of his kingdom, banished him into the forest for thirteen years and treacherously refused to redeem their pledge to give back even a part of the kingdom. He was unhinged at the possibility of a fratricidal war; so he put forth arguments in favour of peace and a life of renunciation. His pseudo-pacifism is foreign to him. He cries out, "Alas, what a great sin have we resolved to commit in striving to slay our own people, through our greed for the pleasures of the kingdom, far better would it be for me if the sons of Dhritarastra, with weapons in hand, should slay me in the battle, while I remain unresisting and unarmed."<sup>3</sup> Arjuna dreaded to do his duty; so he invests arguments to give it up. He seeks escape into inaction. His failure is felt in his limbs. They quail, he perspires, his mind was reeling. He becomes unsteady and drowned in sorrow. He seeks a way out of the crisis by taking refuge in the Lord, by putting himself in the place of the disciple in distress who seeks instruction. We are all like Arjuna. He is our representative. The message of the Gita is for all of us.

Arjuna's arguments are refuted by the powerful convincing discourse of the Lord, and also by the demonstration of the Lord's transfiguration which Arjuna is shown.<sup>4</sup> He is put to his duty and made to do it in a spirit of perfect conviction. Arjuna says in the end, "Destroyed is my delusion, I have come into my own through Thy grace. I stand firm, with my doubts dispelled. I shall act according to Thy word."

In short, Arjuna was sentimental and he is taught the goal and the way of yoga. He is asked to fight, no doubt (many times), not like an unregenerate soldier, but as a yogi. He is asked to

---

3. Chapter 1, 45, 46.

4. See Chapter XI.



establish the God-centred life and then fight.<sup>5</sup> He is asked to become a Karma-yogi. The superiority of Karma-yoga is asserted in comparison to all the other ways of God-realization. The yogin of the Gita is greater than the ascetic. He is considered to be greater than the man of knowledge and greater than the man of ritual, then, therefore, become a yogin is the instruction.<sup>6</sup>

The ideal of Karma-Yoga is the best way to God-realization. It includes knowledge of God (*jnana*), devotion to God (*bhakti*), renunciation (*samnyasa*), action and service (*karma* and *seva*); with all this it does not renounce action. It is not world-negation, but self-negation. It is not freedom *from* action but freedom *in* action. It is the most desirable and feasible means for God-realization, within the reach of all of us. The faith of the Karma-yogin is the first thing to be noted. The yogin is not a rationalist, in the narrow sense of the term, nor is he an agnostic nor a sceptic. He is not an unbeliever. The first article of his faith is the belief in the existence of the omnipotent and loving nature of the supreme personality of God. Faith in God and His goodness is the foundation of the yogin's character. The God of the Karma-Yogin is immanent as well as transcendent. He fashioned the world by exerting his power on *prakrti*.<sup>7</sup> He is organic to the universe. This means, the world is dependent on him, but he is not dependent on it.<sup>8</sup> The Lord is the father of this world, the mother, the supporter and the grand-sire. He is the object of all knowledge, the purifier, the syllable *om*, the yogins and the Sama Veda. He is the goal, the upholder, the Lord, the witness and the abode, the refuge and the friend. He is the origin, the dissolution, the ground and the resting place and the imperishable seed.<sup>9</sup>

The God of the yogin does not sit on the fringes of the universe and watch the drama of life. God is in us, with us and above us. He has left his impress on Nature and man. The Lord says, "I am seated in the heart of all."<sup>10</sup> "The Lord is the enjoyer of sacrifices and austerities, is the Lord of the world and friend of all

---

5. Chapter VIII—7.

6. Chapter VI—48.

7. Chapter IV—6.

8. Chapter IX—4 and 5.

9. Chapter IV—17-18.

10. Chapter X—20.



(*suhrdam sarvabhutanam*).<sup>11</sup> He is dynamic, he incarnates himself to redeem injustice at all critical times. He imparts wisdom and drives away despair in his devotees. Further, the yogin believes that souls are immortal, pure in their intrinsic nature, eternal and are uncreated essences. The world of nature is the handiwork of God and hence, is governed by moral Laws. It is not amoral or unorganized events. He believes in the Law of Karma, i.e. that actions have reactions, that there is nothing private or unimportant in the world. He holds that man takes a number of births to realize the fellowship of the Lord.

This raises the question as to what makes men oblivious and neglectful of their duty; in short, it is what holds man in bondage and eclipses God's light from his vision. It is this state that is referred to as the fall in the Christian terminology and as 'avidya' in Vedanta. The cause of this bondage is vividly described in the Gita. It is passions, sense-attachment, anger, and inordinate desires, all these hold back men in bondage. The passions and desire take their abode in the sense organs, and delude men. "They are the enemies and foul destroyer, of knowledge and wisdom. They veil the real nature of the soul and God from man."<sup>12</sup>

It is this unregenerate nature of man that is responsible for the anti-social, selfish and occasional criminal actions of men. It is the cause of the inhumanity of man to man. In short, it is the cause for anarchy among nations and listlessness in men.

The way out of this predicament is Karma-Yoga. This path is first and foremost opposed to complete renunciation of all works as the goal for God-realization.

In the history of Indian thought two ways of spiritual realization have been preached, one is the way of complete renunciation, i.e. the giving up of all works. The only thing that we can do is to get out of life. We must keep ourselves pure from the stain of action. The world is a snare, it is a nightmare, we can only wake up. Any type of action we produce results in things that bind us to samsara. Action forges chains and binds us forever. So let us renounce all action. The Gita is opposed to such renunciation.

The positive view of life is called the *pravritti marga* which makes men live an active life for securing the material and other

11. Chapter V—29.

12. Chapter III-V, 37 to 42.



goods. In the words of Professor Hiriyanna, the Gita has discovered the golden mean between the two opposing ideals. "It preserves the excellence of both the methods. It does not abandon activity, it preserves the spirit of renunciation. It commands a strenuous life, and yet gives no room for the play of selfish impulses." The ideal of Karma-Yoga keeps the spirit of renunciation and combines it with a life of ceaseless activity. This ideal is given wide and permanent currency by the Gita. The Gita has focused this practical teaching in its splendidly devised setting. This ideal is the central message of the Gita according to all moderns—Tilak, Radhakrishnan, Aurobindo, Besant, Tagore, Vinobaji and Vivekananda.

The Karma-yoga ideal is in keeping with the biological and psychological nature of man. Activity is the very breath of human existence. Man cannot live even for a moment without action. Cosmic existence is based on dynamic activity. Act we must for keeping life and there is no escape from it. It is necessary for any social order. Not all action is Karma-yoga; nor all giving up renunciation. Karma-yoga doctrine requires us to lead an active moral life and still escape the bondage that our actions forge for us. That is the secret of Karma-yoga. The active moral life of man is to be lived in a particular spirit. It is this spirit that quite paradoxically transmutes activity into a condition of freedom from bondage.

Karma-yoga is not mechanical activity. It is not physical interaction, nor is it the mere promptings of instinct, as in the animal world. It is not even the egoistic activity of a so-called utilitarian, who acts on the pleasure principle. It is a yoga, i.e. an activity which seeks God-union by a definite method.

It is not unconsidered action, nor vague speculation. It takes the intellect into account. An enlightened understanding is the necessary preliminary for Karma-yoga. Further, the agent must act from a sense of duty and not for any particular fruit. He must not be obsessed by the idea of the result.<sup>13</sup> This detachment is absolutely necessary for the yoga. It makes for equanimity and does not disturb us and makes for efficient action. It secures concentration and makes one-pointed attention possible. Besides, once the agent is not oppressed by the fruits of the action, there

13. Chapter II—47. See also: Mahadev Desai, *The Gita according to Gandhiji*.



is no temptation or chance of his adopting any unscrupulous means to achieve his end.

Here it may be questioned, what serves as the motive for action in the doings of the Karma-yogin?

Motiveless action is psychologically impossible. The author of the Gita does not deny the validity of all motives. He only denies selfish motives. The central motive that actuates the Karma-yogin is the love of God, i.e. *Isvara-priti*. He is not a stoic who prides upon his sense of fortitude and powers of self-denial. He renounces not only the desire for the fruit of the action, but also the sense of agency.

It is quite possible for man to be detached about the fruits of the action, but it is impossible to rid himself of the sense of agency. It is in this effort the Karma-yogin needs 'Devotion' and 'Surrender' to the Lord; Bhakti comes in here. Without a complete knowledge of the philosophical truths and the love of God, an unreserved surrender to God, it is not possible for the yogin to give up his sense of agency and feel himself as an instrument of the Lord, to do his will. Whatever may be the differences among the ancient commentators of the Gita, they are all agreed that the Gita teaches all the yogas, karma, bhakti and jnana. Modern commentators have shown that bhakti and jnana are not exclusive of karma-yoga.

The renunciation element in the Karma-yoga is the giving up of the desire for the fruit of the action and the sense of agency. The positive element is the love of God and the willing co-operation to carry out His ideal. This is the ideal of the welfare of the world (*Lokasamgraha*). The Karma-yoga ideal is not for extraordinary men. It is within the reach of all of us. Its scope is comprehensive. It is not for a select privileged few. It does not make impossible demands on man. Nor does it say that all must do the same thing. Its way of life is not ascetic. It stands for an all-round development of man. No side of human nature is to be cheated, none over-paid. It stands for the doctrine of moderation. "Yoga is not for him who eats too much, or abstains too much from eating. It is not for him who sleeps too much or keeps awake late. For a man who is temperate in his food and recreation, who is restrained in all his actions and who has regulated his sleep and vigils, yoga puts an end to all his



sorrow.”<sup>14</sup> The morality of the Karma-yogin lays stress on self-control and not on repression. It stands for perfect control (*samyama*) resulting in an integrated personality. It asks each individual to pursue the calling or the duty that is nearest to his temperament (*svabhava*). It equates duty with one's nature (*svabhava* with *svadharma*). The pursuit of one's nature makes for ease, spontaneity and grace in the actions of men. It also avoids social waste and effects perfect co-ordination. Karma-yoga insists on each individual to take to his own *svadharma* and to do his duty that is native to his self. The Gita is harsh on those who take to others' duty and forbids it. The moral life of the Karma-yogin is not arid; there is joy and perfect freedom in it. It is not a cold gospel that asks us to repress our impulses, endure all evils, biting our lips. It is not a kill-joy-morality. It stands for a 'life guided by knowledge and inspired by love.'

The greatness of the Gita as a world-scripture consists in the fact that it makes its chief ideal of Karma-yoga, a concrete way of life. We have instruction on all details about food regulation, the technique of meditation, duties and responsibilities, the nature and types of gifts. It is complete and comprehensive in its details. Man must live as the active contemplative, who lives in the world, and is not of it, who regards all as his own self, and who sees divinity in all. The Karma-yogin is a *bhakta* and a *jnanin*. He brings his devotion into action. The Gita ideal is wisdom, i.e. knowledge in action.

The religion of the Karma-yogin is the genuine spiritual religion the world needs. The God of the Gita is known for his tolerance and non-dogmatism. He declares, "As men approach me so do I accept them, men on all sides follow my path."<sup>15</sup> The theism of the Gita is tolerant. It makes for no creedal wars. It stands for the fellowship of faiths. It breathes an air of tolerance and represents the universal elements of religion. It makes out that religion should help us to lead a good and useful life. "Religion is of the nature of Truth, is the repose of life; the delight of the mind and is the fullness of peace and eternity."

---

14. Chapter VI—17-18.

15. Chapter IV-II: It is in this verse we have the catholic view expressed, which denies the Unipersonal incarnation of God. God is manifested differently. No form is an exclusive representation of His nature.



The perennial value of Gita and its eternal significance is described by the first British Governor-General in India, Warren Hastings.<sup>16</sup> He writes that 'works like the Bhagavad Gita will survive when the British Dominion in India shall have long ceased to exist and when the sources which it once yielded of wealth and power are lost to remembrance'.<sup>17</sup>

The Gita ideal has not merely a national significance. Its message is for all and is for all times. Referring to its universality Aldous Huxley in his introduction to the translation of the Gita by Swami Prabhavananda and Isherwood writes, "The Gita is one of the clearest and most comprehensive summaries of the perennial philosophy ever to have been made. Hence, its enduring value is not only for Indians, but for all mankind. Its significance is global and its message is terrifically topical to us."

Krishna, the world-teacher (*jagadguru*), is better known than the pastoral Krishna or Krishna the man of action. Vinobaji writes, "Let us not say, Arjuna had Krishna; where are we to find our Krishna? Let us not get caught in the fallacy of historicity, that there was an individual called Krishna, Krishna shines in the heart of each of us. He is nearer to us than the nearest. So, let us place the flaws and falsehoods of our heart before him and say, 'Oh Lord, I take refuge in you, you are my sole master (*Guru*). Show me the right way. I shall tread only the path you show.' If we do so, we ourselves shall hear the Gita in his own voice and He will lead us to victory."<sup>18</sup>

The universal nature of the message of the Gita is consistent with reason and the demands of humanity. God, according to Gita, is not exhausted or completely revealed in only one form. There is not only one incarnation of God. All the forms in which divinity manifests are all true and are of equal value. The central message of the Gita is not violence or the goading us to fight and declare war. It is the gospel that teaches the way to perfect one's self and realize the divine potential in man. The Gita has influenced contemporary Indian thought as no other single book has done. "It is catholic in its message, comprehen-

---

16. Introduction to the English translation of the Gita by Charles Wilkins (1785).

17. Taittiriya Upanishad 1-6, "*Satyatma Pranaramma mana anandam Shanti Samrddham*."

18. Talks on the Gita, p. 10.



sive in its outlook and concrete in its suggestions." Its great merit is that it does not preach an impossible and austere morality. It is a layman's gospel. It is supremely alive to the differences of the minds and temperaments of individuals. It makes provision for the diversified individuals that inhabit the earth. Its message does not smoothen out all differences and steam-roll all into one. It allows each to grow to his best according to his grain. It does not bother how big a circle we draw, it insists that there must be always a centre for it. We must stand erect and free. It pleads that we must first study the truths of scripture from a realized Guru. This is called *Sravaṇa*. Secondly, we are to critically examine the scripture-taught truth through reasoning, i.e. *Manana*. After this we must intensively and continually meditate on the truths, till it results in a vivid direct realization of God. For this yogic discipline, what is absolutely necessary is the consolidation of the three-level practice in our thought, speech and action (*manas*, *vakys* and *kaya*). The Gita has given us the religion of spiritual Humanism. It presents a complete and integrated spiritual ideal for man. It advocates the love of God as the supreme end of life. In making Bhakti the supreme ideal, it gives a blow to the mechanical life of the round of rituals that is mistaken for religion. It also criticizes the vague, unrelated, speculation of religious categories. It advocates God-love in a manner which is open to all. It breaks down all the barriers that divide man and man. It throws open the road to God, to all men irrespective of their caste, creed, sex and status in life.

The Gita's "insistence" on morality saves the doctrine of Bhakti from degenerating into a cloak for immorality or sensuality. Its insistence on an active moral life makes Bhakti not an excuse for the neglect of daily duty and social obligations. In a world where one half lacks a common faith, the other half has a faith imposed on it, the only consolation is the religion of the Gita.



## 20. *Buddha and Buddhism*

INDIA IN the history of her philosophy created a great world-religion in Buddhism. It is described as "the most colossal example in history of applied metaphysics." In the words of another Western scholar, Buddha is one of the giant intellects of the world, who, probing through the deceptions of the human heart and will, arrived at a solution to the ills of life. He has another side to his genius in his great love for his fellow beings. The success and the influence of Buddhism was in no small measure due to the latter aspect of his personality, "Buddha was the pioneering lover of men and a philosophic genius rolled into a single vigorous and radiant personality."

The facts of the changefulness and misery of life moved Buddha to serious reflection and induced in him a deep spiritual anguish. His sensitive nature felt the experience of the miseries of life to be oppressive. It became a serious mission for him to find a way out of the tangle of the ills of life. This was the awakening to the problem. He could not rest content till he found the solution. When he beheld "with incandescent clarity the whole concatenation of causes and effects which regulate the misery called life," he formulated the truth of his experience in intellectual terms for the benefit of his contemporaries.

The teaching of Buddha is based on an acute analysis of human experience. There is no appeal to authority or any claim to special and exclusive revelation. He found human life full of misery and untold suffering and every experience impermanent and full of sorrow. He declared therefore that all existence is pain and sorrow. But sorrow is not uncaused. If it was uncaused, it would be irremovable. It has definite causes and conditions for



its emergence. Buddha laid bare the causes that bring about sorrow. He treated the fact of sorrow as a physician deals with a disease. There is the cause of the disease, and there is a state of health as well. In tracing the cause of sorrow, Buddha found it to be 'thirst' or longing for worldly objects.

According to Buddha nothing is unconditional. The existence of every event depends on other events. This is the famous doctrine of "dependent origination." This doctrine states that everything in the empirical world is relative, conditional, dependent, impermanent and subject to birth and death. The formula is expressed in this simple way: 'this being, that arises.' Depending on the cause, the effect arises. But the circle which brings misery can be destroyed. The way to it is indicated in the moral discipline taught by Buddha.

The chief cause for sorrow according to Buddha is the ignorant mistaking of the non-permanent for the permanent. The empirical self of man is a compound, an aggregate of several factors, viz., the physical aspect, self-consciousness, feeling, perception and dispositions. The Buddhist conception of self is a unique one. It is brought home to us in a graphic manner in the *Milindapanha*. There ensues a conversation between the Greek king Menander and the Buddhist sage Nagasena. The Greek king rode on his chariot and came to see the sage. The sage asked him, "Great king, hast thou come on foot or in a chariot?" "I do not travel on foot, Sire; I have come in a chariot" replied the king. The sage asked, "If thou hast come in a chariot, then define the chariot. Is the pole the chariot? Are the wheels the chariot?" Similar questions were put about many other parts of the chariot and then the sage, instructing the king about the nature of the self, said that as the chariot is nothing more than its assembled parts, the self is also a label only for certain aggregates of physical and psychical factors. The doctrine of non-soul is agreed to by all the schools of Buddhism. The concept of a permanent unchanging self is believed to be the cause of all our sorrows. It is argued that if the soul has in it already something and is by its nature perfect and permanent, ethical striving and man's effort to perfect himself loses its point and significance. The supremacy of the ethical ideal of Buddha finds its logical culmination in the denial of a permanent self. Other systems have not pushed their metaphysical accounts to such a len-



gth. The concept of self is the root cause of all suffering and sorrow. It has to be got rid of by ethical and moral living. It is towards this great ideal that Buddha directs all his teaching. He expressed the view that vain metaphysical speculations do not save man. He was opposed to discussions on theoretical problems. He has listed for us fourteen inexplicables, such as whether the world is finite or not. His contention is that speculation which is not necessary for ethical life is arid and useless. He states a parable to illustrate the futility of metaphysical views. A man is hit by a poisoned arrow. When his friends bring a doctor the wounded man would say "I will not have the arrow drawn out until I know who shot it, whether a man or a woman, or a Brahmin, etc.", what would happen? The man will die. Likewise man's supreme need is to remove the causes of worldly sorrows and not to seek answers to questions that are not relevant to the issue. Buddha taught that ethical effort often gets distracted because of futile metaphysical speculations.

Buddha explains his concept of self in terms of a mind-continuum. The psychical states rigorously condition their subsequent states. The law of karma explains it. Each previous condition produces its next. Buddha believed that man is free to build his moral life. He did not indent on the supernatural. It is a form of self-culture based on virtues, concentration of mind and wisdom. It is a form of severe self-discipline.

Man has no fate except his past deeds,  
No hell but what he makes,  
No heaven too high for those to reach  
Whose passions sleep subdued.

A few incidents in the Buddha's life bring out his distinctive character. He asks his followers not to accept anything as truth because a man of prestige declares it. Once, Sariputta declared: "Such faith have I, Lord, in Thee, methinks there never has been nor will be nor is now any other greater or wiser than you." Buddha replied "Of course, you have known all the Buddhas of the past?" "No Lord." "Well then, you know those of the future?" "No Lord." "Then at least you know me and have penetrated my mind thoroughly?" "Not even that, Lord." "Then why, Sariputta, are your words so grand and bold?"



The Buddha never hid anything from his disciples. He answered the hungering needs of man. He declared, "I have preached the truth without making any distinction between exoteric and esoteric doctrine; for in respect of the truths, the Tathagatta has no such thing as the closed fist of a teacher who keeps something back."

The Buddha denounced unfair criticism of other creeds. He asked his disciples to patiently sift opinions and build their lives on the foundation of reason. He was not afraid of ridicule. He said, "If a man looks up and spits at heaven, the spittle does not soil the heaven but comes back and defiles his own person." He was against conversion by compulsion. He leaves his arguments to the persuasive power of truth.

The compassion of the Buddha has no limit. He declared that he is willing to be born any number of times to save the last dust from misery. The religion of Buddha was developed on two lines of interpretations, the Theravada and the Mahayana schools. The first does not accept a God, nor grace as necessary for salvation. It entirely bases itself on knowledge and works. It is a spiritual view which is not theistic. It too believes in the moral order. In the Mahayana, the Buddha is not merely regarded as an historical person but he is identified with the Absolute or Sunyata. The Buddha is the inner essence of all things. Buddhahood is latent in all of us. The Buddha is one with the Absolute in one of his aspects, but in his other aspects, he takes on a body of bliss by which he contemplates his divine nature and personality and assumes many forms to teach the law and save men by his grace. The compassion of the Buddha is "prepared for any sacrifice for any being and for all times." It is this compassion for all and it is his unceasing effort to save all that makes the concept of Buddha the purest and the most exalted concept of the divine. The Mahayana does not prescribe one and the same method for all. The teaching of the Buddha is accommodated to the temperament of the individual. The choice of the means to save the spiritual aspirant is left to the Buddha.



## 21. *Sankara's Advaita Vedanta*

### I

THE MOST reputed philosophical system of India is the Monistic school of Vedanta popularized by Sankara. It is called the Advaita system. Sankara gave definitive shape to it. Hence his contribution is most significant and substantial. He has carved out a definite metaphysical system "irrefutable" in its logic and artistic in its structure. In accordance with tradition he relied for the doctrine of his system on the Triple Texts (the Gita, Vedanta Sutras and the Upanishads). He points out that the central purport of the Triple Texts is the identity of the individual soul with Brahman.

The greatest work of Sankara is the celebrated Commentary on the Vedanta Sutras. The Commentary is at once a philosophical classic and a piece of great literature. His commentaries on the Brihadaranyaka and Chandogya Upanishads discuss in detail many an important doctrine of Advaita.

The doctrines enunciated by Sankara in his Commentary have been subsequently commented upon by the post-Sankara thinkers. Some of his doctrines have been defended and others amplified. The Hindu habit of writing commentaries and sub-commentaries on cryptic texts has contributed a great deal to the development of philosophic thought. "No one who reads the lengthy discussion of the nature and function of psychosis will continue to believe that there is no scope for originality or progress in their commentaries and sub-commentaries."<sup>1</sup> Post-

1. *Siddhantalesasangraha*, Introduction by S. S. Suryanarayana Sastri, pp. 5, 6. In the matter and the presentation of this article I am largely indebted to the lectures and writings of Mr Sastri.

Sankara dialecticians with an unswerving loyalty to their master have proved to the hilt the doctrines of Advaita through the method of dialectics. One who studies the dialectic on 'difference' in post-Sankara thought will be convinced that Advaita is not facile intuition based on scriptural declaration and mystical experience, but a cogent intellectual system.

Before Sri Sankara there were two great Advaita teachers—Mandana and Gaudapada. Gaudapada is the progenitor of Advaita thought. The Advaita system is found in some form in Gaudapada's Commentary on the Mandukya Upanishad. Sankara has commented on Gaudapada's work. Mandana has worked out a system of Advaita in his *Brahma Siddhi*. He is considered by some scholars to be an elder contemporary of Sankara. He has contributed a great deal to Advaita dialectics. Many a commentator on Sankara has vastly drawn on Mandana.

The advent of Sankara is a landmark in the history of Indian philosophic thought. He raised the stature of Indian philosophic thought to great heights. Of all the systems of Indian philosophy his is the most logical. Once we grant the postulates of the system there is nothing to grumble at or resent in the detailed expositions of the doctrines of the system.

## II

Sankara throughout his exposition sought to refute two positions, the Sankhya and the Mimamsa. He wanted to point out—and has fairly succeeded in doing so—that the Upanishads do not countenance the view held by Sankhyans, that the Upanishads establish a dualism of spirits on one side and matter on the other.

The Mimamsakas are of the opinion that the essential teaching of the Veda is contained in the Brahmanas and not in the Upanishads. They upheld the doctrine that salvation through ceremonial acts is the central purport of the Vedas. They further pointed out that the references to the self in the Upanishads should be looked upon as speaking of the self, who is the agent in respect of the performance of rites and ceremonies. Action, i.e. Karma and not Brahman is the central doctrine of the Mimamsakas. Sankara has criticized *in extenso* the Mimamsa position. He points out that the Brahmanas and the Upanishads



speak of two distinct entities. The Upanishads are the most important portion of the Veda. The purport of the Upanishads is not action but Brahman; they teach us the method of realizing the Brahman as the self. The Brahmanas and the Mantras are secondary in their significance. They are not organically and directly connected with the theme of the Upanishads. The Purva Mimamsa has nothing to do with Uttara Mimamsa. Ceremonial purity and ethical excellence may at best help the spiritual aspirant. They are not substitutes for Brahman. Nor can Brahman be realized by their help. They purify the mind. Brahman-realization can only be achieved by *Jnana* (i.e. knowledge) and not by action.

Further, Sankara points out that his Brahman is not the void of the Buddhists. The Brahman of Sankara is the positive existence without which there would be no universe. It is the substrata underlying the whole world of phenomena. Spiritual realization negates the phenomenal through the affirmation of the real. The Advaitin denies only names and forms but not that which appears under their guise. The reality of the real is experienced. The Advaitin negates only distinction (*bheda*), the Buddhist negates the existence of the substrate also.<sup>2</sup> There is nothing permanent and stable underlying the flux of the universe for Buddha. Such a position is refuted by Sankara *in extenso* in the second chapter of his commentary on the Vedanta Sūtras. The central reality, Brahman, is posited by scripture and realized by the self.

It may be of some interest here to note that some of our modern interpreters of Vedanta have tried to equate Advaita and Buddhism. They point out that Buddha could by no possible means have preached an arid and barren nihilism to the folk of his day. It is psychologically impossible to believe that Buddha should have enjoyed the popularity he did if he had merely preached nihilism. Professor Radhakrishnan argues that Buddha did affirm a central reality and negated only the phenomenal self. Further, he asserts that the silence of Buddha is significant of the truth that final truths cannot be expressed. The Professor concludes that it is to mistake the stature of Buddha to treat him as a nihilist.

---

2. Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, pp. 336-337.



However interesting such an exposition might be, we do not find sanction for it in Advaita literature. Every Advaita thinker has clearly pointed out that there is vital difference between Advaita and Buddhism. The modern interpreters of Buddhism do not find any support in the view held by the opponents of Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva. Ramanuja and Madhva have styled Sankara a *pracchanna Bauddha*, a *Bauddha incognito*. But they do not hold the view that Buddha did affirm a central reality. Vedantins of all shades of thought are one in affirming the nihilism of Buddha.

### III

Brahman is the central reality of Advaita. It is the supreme spirit, consciousness and intelligence. Revealed scripture is the final authority for the existence of Brahman. Brahman is not an object of knowledge. It is knowledge itself. There is nothing beside it. It cannot be described in the terms of any other than itself. It is not a relatum in the relational process of knowledge. It cannot be the content of any cognition without losing its selfhood. It is self-manifest and self-luminous. The instruments of knowledge (*pramanas*) can only tell us negatively what Brahman is. There is no knowing Brahman; there is only being Brahman. It can only be known in a non-relational form. Brahman-intuition is not a cognition in the form of a subject and object relation. It is an experience, gifted to the disciplined souls who have purified their minds by the performance of scripture-ordained duties and concentrated on scripture-thought reality. Brahman is one without a second. Outside Brahman there is nothing. Inference and perception substantiate the truth established by scripture.

The establishment of Brahman on the authority of the scripture appears unphilosophical at first sight.<sup>3</sup> But in reality it is not so. Supreme authority is not claimed for all scriptures as such. Purportful scripture alone is said to be authoritative and not the rest. Scripture is a cogent array of words. It has to be interpreted by an intelligent agent. There are certain approved determinative marks of purport adopted by the Vedantins for the interpretation of scripture. They are:

3. *Bhamati*, Introduction by S. S. Suryanarayana Sastri, pp. 13-15.



1. The harmony of the initial and concluding passages;
2. Repetition;
3. Novelty;
4. Fruitfulness;
5. Glorification by eulogistic passages and condemnation by deprecatory passages;
6. Intelligibility in the light of reasoning.

The application of reason is apparently only one of the marks of purport. In reality reason plays a much more important part than is formally avowed. In fact reason steps in at every stage. When we have to settle the introductory and concluding passage, reason has to help us in the choice. It is reason that helps us to distinguish the intermediary and the secondary passages and, it is again reason that has to point out which repetition is purportful and which is not. The really novel has to be ascertained by reason. "So the authoritarianism of Advaita is only unphilosophical on the face of it involving as it does the abundant exercise of reason. . . . In the end reason itself has to judge when it conflicts with scripture and when it does not."

#### IV

The Brahman of Advaita is not the creator of the universe in the sense that a potter creates a pot. Sankara does not uphold the creationist theory. The non-existent can never be created out of anything. Sankara attacks the intelligibility of the category, causation. If the effect were really non-existent prior to its creation as the Nyaya school holds, no agency whatever could bring it about, any more than a thousand craftsmen could turn blue into yellow or extract oil from sand. The Sankhyan after criticizing the Nyaya position points out that the effect is found in a potential form in the cause. The effect is merely a transformation of the cause. The effect is not non-existent prior to the cause. It is not brought into existence *de novo*. We always seek the appropriate cause for the appropriate effect. One who wants curds seeks milk and not water. It is unintelligible to say that the effect is non-existent prior to its creation. The cause which is an existent cannot have any kind of intelligible relation with a non-existent effect. The cause-effect phenomenon is



essentially a relation. Relation obtains only between two existents and not between an existent and a non-existent. If relation is denied between cause and effect the category itself becomes unintelligible.

Sankara refutes the theory of the Sankhyans, i.e. transformation. The Sankhyan explanation that the effect is merely a transformation of the cause fares no better at the hands of Sankara. Granted that causation is manifestation, is this existent or not? If this is already existent the causal operation is superfluous. If it is not existent then there will have to be a cause of the manifestation and that in its turn will need another cause. Thus we shall have an endless series of causes. Thus it is clear that the conception of cause is fundamentally unintelligible. Becoming has to be explained. In the process of explanation either it leaves the problem untouched or explains it away altogether. The problem is how A (the cause) becomes B (the effect). If they are identical there is no becoming. If cause and effect are really different we cannot establish any relation between them. It is open to us to say that it is an identity-in-difference relation. The cause A and the effect B are partially identical and partially different. This fares no better. In so far as the identity element is concerned there is no becoming; in so far as they are different there is no relation possible between them. So the Advaitin concludes that cause and effect are identical in their essence. They appear as cause and effect. Cause and effect are illusory manifestations of Brahman. Brahman is neither the cause of the world nor is it transformed into the world. It is in no way connected with the world of plurality. It never becomes anything. It is the perfect being.<sup>4</sup>

## V

The negative description of Brahman attempted by the Advaitin is not without its logic. The whole of Advaita dialectics rests on two general postulates: (1) the absolutely real is never sublated; and (2) the absolutely unreal is never cognized. The example of the absolutely real is Brahman, and examples of the absolutely

---

4. *Sankhyakarika* edited by S. S. Suryanarayana Sastri, pp. 28-32 (2nd edition).



unreal are the barren woman's son and the horns of a hare. In between these two categories the whole world of plurality is caught. The world of plurality which we perceive, manipulate and live in is neither real nor unreal. In deep sleep we experience at least a temporary sublation of the plural universe. As it is sublated, the universe is not real. It is not unreal, because it is cognized; nor is it real and unreal because such a definition violates the law of contradiction. It is this indeterminable nature of the universe as real or unreal that is connoted by the term Maya. The Advaitin points out that all the categories of finite relational knowledge are applicable only to the universe which is indeterminable. Brahman cannot be adequately known in its true self with the help of the finite categories. The application of the finite categories is restricted to the world of plurality. The absolutely real Brahman loses its selfhood when it becomes an object of rational knowledge. So no predication in respect of Brahman is intelligible because there is nothing real besides itself. The Upanishadic descriptions of Brahman in terms of knowledge, bliss and infinite should not be interpreted as predicates. Brahman is not one who has infinite knowledge, infinite bliss, but is knowledge and bliss itself. The predicates attributed to Brahman in the Upanishads should be interpreted in the sense of identity. With reference to Brahman the import of propositions is identity and not predication. All the attributes of which the scriptures speak with reference to Brahman ought to be carefully scanned. Some of them are qualifications *per accidens*. It is the weakness of finite cognition to compare the infinite and refer to it in terms of the finite. It is meaningless to refer to Brahman as the good or the truthful. It is the final truth and it is absurd to refer to the final truth as truthful. It is highest utility and the highest good. Predications have no meaning with reference to Brahman because it is perfect. There can be no purpose or progress for the perfect. Progress and perfection are in Brahman and not out of it. Brahman does not admit of substrate-attribute relation. It does not admit of the relation between the part and the whole. It is the end as well as the means. So it is spoken of as the impartite (akhanda) one. It is these logical difficulties that prevented Sankara from attributing creation and other activities to Brahman.



## VI

The entire Universe of plurality on Advaita hypothesis is neither created by Brahman nor is the transformation of Brahman. It is an illusory manifestation of Brahman. The central problem of Advaita is "how does this illusory manifestation take place and why does it take place?" The straight answer to this question is the most inexplicable knotty expression *Maya* (i.e. Nescience). It is this nescience that is responsible for the plurality we perceive. It has two functions. It obscures the substrate, i.e. Brahman and projects in its place the world of plurality. "Suppression precedes substitution." Thus plurality is due to the projecting and the obscuring effects of nescience. This nescience is indeterminable. It is not definable in terms of anything. It is the material cause of the world of plurality. The jurisdiction of nescience is so complete that it only leaves Brahman out. Finite cognition and the categories of such cognition, the instruments of human knowledge, import of scriptures, etc., are all products of nescience. Nescience is represented as a positive beginningless entity. Nescience itself is illusory and it is sublated.

The Advaitin's concept of nescience has been submitted to a great deal of criticism.<sup>5</sup> The law of excluded middle is the tool with which the Advaitin is attacked. The world is spoken of by the Advaitin as illusory. Is that illusion illusory? If the illusoriness of the universe is itself an illusion then the world becomes real because of the cancellation of the two negations. If the illusoriness of the universe is real there is a contradiction for the Advaita doctrine that there is only one reality. The resourceful Advaitin finds his way out of the dilemma. He does say that the illusoriness of the universe is illusory. He urges the possibility that a qualification can apply not only to something else, viz., the subject, but also to itself. Illusoriness is only a predicate of illusion just as reality is said to be real. It would be unintelligible to say that a predicate cannot qualify itself. To those of the dualist persuasion this might seem a paradox.

Our very knowledge is a paradox for the following reasons.<sup>6</sup>

5. *Siddhantaśaṅkara*, Introduction, pp. 48-51.

6. Cf. *Advaita and the Concept of Progress*, S. S. Suryanarayana Sastri, pp. 14-15.



We cannot have knowledge of the unknown since there can be no activity in respect of what is unknown nor can knowledge be of the known, because we never try to know the known. If it be contended that it is of the partly known, then does the cognitive activity apply to the known part or the unknown? In either case we have the same difficulty. Because of this paradox we do not conclude that knowledge is perfect. We understand that at the root of finite cognition and knowledge there is the core of unintelligibility. We conclude that relational knowledge of the finite is not perfect and it is only an appearance of the perfect knowledge that is Brahman. Because of this central paradox in all finite activity and the irreducible unintelligibility thereof, the Advaitin does not commit himself to any definite description about the world of plurality. He does not recklessly repudiate. He is a sceptic and not a dogmatist. By the very use of the categories of logic he points out the rift in the lute. The great lesson of Advaita logic is that it exposes the clay-footed nature of logic. The Advaitin is not out to demonstrate this or that. He points out that every other position held by the opponent is untenable. If the Advaitin occasionally attempts a definition to establish the nature of the function of nescience it is only an act of conformity to the intellectual climate of the age.

Another usual objection raised against nescience is its practical efficiency. Nescience as described by the Advaitin is indeterminable. How can the indeterminable be practically efficient? The Advaitin holds that practical efficiency belongs only to the indeterminable and finite world. Practical efficiency is not attributed to Brahman. The absolutely real is perfect, partless, and free from change. Hence there can be no activity or efficiency in respect of it. As the world of plurality is short of this reality, it has practical efficiency.

How can the cognition generated by the nescience-tainted pramanas lead us to Brahman-intuition? To this the Advaitin replies that error is oftentimes the gateway to truth. The pramana that makes known an object need not be as real as the object. Dream experiences produce practical physiological effects on the dreamer. The phenomenal pramana can point to the absolutely real. In scientific thought we find erroneous hypotheses lead us to valid theories. So the illusory nature of the pramana is no obstacle for us to know the truth. Just as the bamboo in the



forest which sets fire to the whole forest burns itself along with the forest, so does the illusory final knowledge destroy other illusions and itself. The image of a person reflected in a mirror is not real but still it serves as the means of showing to us the defects in our face. Error and delusion have their own utility. The world of plurality is not entirely real or unreal. Hence it is described as *Anirvacaniya*.

The two realms set up by Advaita namely the phenomenal and the noumenal must somehow be shown to be continuous. Without such a synoptic view it would be unintelligible to maintain that the world is an illusory manifestation of Brahman. "From the empirical to the real, from the appearance to the absolute a passage is either possible or is not. If not, the absolutist philosophy of Sankara is an irrelevant nightmare." The appearance of this world of plurality is the appearance of the real. There is a continuity between the phenomenal and the noumenal. The relative reality of the phenomenal world is derived from the absolutely real and is reducible ultimately to the absolute. The ground and consequent relation cannot be urged into service to explain the relation between the absolute and the appearance.

## VII

An extreme wing of Advaita holds the view that there is only one nescience and that nescience reflects Brahman and as soon as that reflected soul attains release there is the destruction of the nescience. On this view there exists only one *Jiva* (soul). The presence of other Jivas bound as well as released is compared to the dreams of the single Jiva. Such a radical solipsistic view is not acceptable to the majority of Advaitins. Besides, scripture declares that there are released as well as bound souls. So a plurality of nesciences is posited. It is the difference between the various nesciences that accounts for the variety of finite individuals. Sankara seems to approve the positing of a plurality of nesciences.

The school that holds that there is only one Jiva is of opinion that Brahman is the locus as well as the content of nescience. Nescience cannot be located in the inert or have the inert for content. This school goes by the name '*Ekajivavada*'.

But the majority of Advaitins posit a plurality of nescience.



The content of nescience is Brahman and its locus is Jiva. It may be objected that Jiva cannot come into existence without the functioning of nescience and nescience cannot be located in its own product, Jiva. There is thus the charge of reciprocal dependence urged against the Advaitin. The Advaitin finds a way out of this fix by positing the beginningless nature of the interaction of nescience and Jivahood (soulhood). The Advaitin says that there was no time when there was no Jiva or nescience. If it still be urged that such a relation of dependence between nescience and Jiva is unintelligible the resolute Advaitin admits the charge. It is in the very nature of nescience to be ultimately unintelligible. Why expect intelligibility in the case of nescience which is indeterminable?

Though nescience is located in the Jiva it does not belong to Jiva. Its content is *Isvara*. The content is also the controller. Ignorance may be located in me, but I am not the controller of my ignorance, though there is the empirical usage to the effect that the ignorance is mine. *Isvara* is the controller, i.e., the arch-juggler (*mayin*) of nescience. He creates the whole universe with nescience as the material cause. The soul does not create the universe.

According to some Advaitins Brahman is reflected in *Maya* (primal nescience) as *Isvara* while the Jivas are reflections of Brahman in *Avidya* (secondary nescience). Such a view makes *Isvara* have nothing in common with the Jivas.

### VIII

There is another view that establishes an organic relation between the Jiva and *Isvara*. The possibility of nescience presupposes two conditions. It has for its content *Isvara* and its locus is Jiva. When the individual soul's nescience is removed he becomes one with *Isvara* and does not become Brahman. When all the souls transcend their nescience there is the realization of Brahman. *Isvara* automatically ceases to exist. On this view *Isvara* is reflected in the various nesciences. Jivas are the reflections of *Isvara*. If it be contended, on the ground that nescience has no quality or visible form, that reflection for it is impossible, the Advaitin explains the fact with the help of an analogy. Just as ether which is infinite and all-pervasive is confined in objects like



pot, so is the Jiva a delimited form of Brahman. This is called the *Avaccheda* view.

## IX

The central import of Advaita is the identity of the individual soul with Brahman. The category of difference is refuted elaborately. The great Advaitin Mandana with an unsurpassed logical acumen has set out the dialectic of difference. He has established that identity is the only intelligible concept.

The central pramana for the Advaitin to establish identity is scripture. He points out that scripture declares the identity in unequivocal terms. Scripture no doubt has to be interpreted according to the determinative marks of purport. The famous Chandogya Sruti points out and identifies the reality of Brahman with that of the self (that thou art Oh *Svetaketu*). This teaching is repeated nine times to show that it is important and that it is the primary purport. This identity with Brahman is not known through ordinary experience as the heat of the fire or the price of bread. It is novel and made known by scripture; so the scriptural declaration is not a mere restatement. Hence it is purportful and novel. It is fruitful also because the knowledge of identity helps us to pass beyond the travail of transmigration. The knowledge of this identity is praised and its opposite deprecated and this stands to reason. From this it follows that the central purport of scripture when interpreted according to determinative marks of purport is identity.

In the Upanishads there are several other purportful passages pointing out difference as the central relation between Brahman and the individual. These Srutis have difference as their purport. The Advaitin explains these passages as elaborating the phenomenal sense with a view to refute it later. Their purport is not ultimately real. The *Bheda Srutis* (scripture which has difference for its purport) are mere elaborations to be refuted by the ultimately real import of scriptures that declare identity as their purport.

"Perception" seems to go against Advaita. Perception points out a world of plurality with distinct objects differing from one another. How can scripture go against the conclusion of the basic instrument of knowledge, perception?



The Advaitin meets the argument in two ways. No doubt perception is our first instrument of knowledge. From this, it by no means follows that perception is unsublatable. It is no doubt the first instrument of knowledge but not basic. There are cases where the cognition derived through a subsequent *pramana* arises only by sublating the cognition derived from the prior *pramana*. Scriptural knowledge arises by sublating the cognition derived through perception. It is not dependent on perception. It is an independent *pramana*.

The Advaitin grants only relative reality to the cognitions derived through perception. Anything short of Brahman is relatively real.

Mandana points out that perception does not cognize difference. The argument is as follows: Difference is a relation. It needs two *relata* for its existence. The principal argument is this: (1) Is difference the nature of the things, (2) or is it an attribute of them? If it were the nature of things there could be no things to be different. If anyone were to point out to a single thing that would break up into a number of things, because difference is of its nature. Thus the process goes on endlessly and it would not even rest with the primal atom. Hence there would be no single thing. So, difference cannot be the nature of things.

Nor can difference be the attribute of the *relata*. If difference is the attribute of things is the attribute different from its substrate, or is it of its very nature? If the attribute is different from the substrate we have three units: (i) the substrate, (ii) the difference which is its attribute, and (iii) the difference of the attribute from the substrate. When we start enquiring into the relation of this difference to the substrate on one hand and the attribute on the other we are condemned to an infinite regress. Thus the category of difference turns out ultimately to be unintelligible. At best it can give us appearance and not truth. To use the words of Bradley it is "a makeshift, a device, a mere practical compromise, most necessary but in the end most indefensible."

## X

The Advaitin does not rest satisfied with the refutation of the category of difference. Those who reject difference take to the doctrine of identity-in-difference. The Advaitin is not fascinated



by the concrete universal. The objective idealism of Bosanquet fares no better at the hands of the Advaitin. The Advaitin no doubt admits that identity and difference are juxtaposed in experience. The mere fact of their presence in experience does not warrant their ultimate reality. The categories accepted in experience are by no means very critical. To say that identity and difference exist together does not make both of them real. The great Advaitin Mandana directs his attack against the identity-cum-difference school. Identity-in-difference turns out only to be a device for self-deception through insufficient analysis.

The path to reach the absolute can be represented in the form of a dialectical argument; "*adhyaropapavadabhyam nisprapancam prapancyate*"; that is, it is a dialectic process whereby the distinctionlessness of knowledge through the agency of nescience passes through determinations which in turn, are withdrawn. There is first the superimposition of plurality on Brahman and then the withdrawal thereof. Superimposition and sublation are the two acts that lead the Advaitin to Moksha or self-realization. The non-dualist cannot afford to despise the world and ignore it. "To ignore the world is not identical with being ignorant of it. There is no short-cut to realization excepting through the superimposition and the withdrawal thereof. The spirit must go forth and come with enriched experience. It must know the perils and pass through the vale of tears. The Advaitin's progress to Moksha is through experience of plurality and then sublation.

## XI

The spiritual aspirant seeking Moksha has necessarily to undergo the moral training imposed by scriptures. Some Advaitins are of the opinion that ethical excellence and ceremonial purity are not directly contributory to spiritual realization. Morality and ritual help the soul to acquire calmness necessary for Vedantic study. Sankara in his Commentary requires the spiritual aspirant to acquire the eligibility for Vedantic enquiry. There are certain specific necessary preliminaries. They are the discrimination of the fleeting from the permanent, non-attachment to results here and hereafter, the qualities of calmness, equanimity, contentment, etc., and the desire for release. Ethical excellence is necessary for the Advaitin as an inevitable step in his path to perfection. Final



realization is through the knowledge of the identity of Brahman and the soul. After acquiring the necessary moral excellence the spiritual aspirant takes to the uninterrupted meditation and contemplation of the only scripture-taught-real, the one without a second. Such a contemplation leads to the final intuition. The final intuition results according to one school of Advaita directly from the non-dual texts and according to another is perceived by the internal organ *manas*. It is a non-relational type of knowledge. It is a sort of a mental perception. It is an immediate experience and an indeterminate cognition. It is comparable to the cognition of the child in the pre-relational stage. Two elements are common between the child's pre-relational cognition and Brahman-intuition. They are immediacy and the non-attributive nature of the cognition. The child's cognition returns to the relational level as it grows but Brahman-intuition never returns to the relational level.

The final intuition has the capacity to destroy itself as well as nescience. Just as when the powder of the clearing-nut is mixed up with muddy water to precipitate the mud, the powder itself does not require any other precipitate, so does Brahman-intuition destroy itself as well as nescience.

The final realization, i.e., *Brahma-saksatkara* is not anything novel or a new creation. It is the realization of the nature of the spirit. It is just like the forgotten golden ornament round one's own neck. The realization of the Advaitin is not merely intended for a sect or a group. It is not the close privilege of the intellectual. If Sankara denied to the Sudra the eligibility of the study of Vedanta he did it not to exclude him from Brahman-realization. He allowed and approved of other easier means for the Sudra to realize Brahman. The path to spiritual realization is not one mechanical route for all. All the buds do not give rise to the same flower. The different spiritual aspirants follow different techniques. Advaita posits realization as possible for all. Release, being the manifestation of one's own nature and nothing adventitious, cannot be denied or withheld from anyone. It is the natural birthright of every soul. "Universal salvation is not only a possibility but a logical necessity for Advaita." Some souls might attain release soon and others might take a longer time. As long as there is going to be a single unreleased soul there is bound to be the existence of nescience. The



presence of nescience is enough preventive of self-realization. As soon as each soul realizes the self it becomes one with Isvara and not Brahman. Brahman-realization is achieved only when all the souls realize their true nature. It is not the purely personal concern of each individual. The Advaita doctrine of universal salvation answers the persistent claims of individuality and social duty put forward by the modern sociologist. The final release of an individual is bound up with the release of others. Hence the necessity to help the other souls to attain release.

## XII

Another interesting concept of Advaita is *Jivan-mukti*. The individual soul obtains release though he is embodied. The physical body has no effect on the soul. The main reason for formulating *Jivan-mukti* is the need for reliable teachers who can teach Advaita experience from self-knowledge. Some are of opinion that the projective energy of nescience is separated from the obscuring energy in the released soul. Some others refer to *Jivan-mukti* as release in a figurative sense.

Realization is not mere absence of misery. It has a positive element also in it, i.e., happiness. It is *sat* (the real), *cit* (consciousness) and *ananda* (bliss). The self in Advaita is not sublated by any other experience because sublation itself is an experience. Non-contradiction and coherence are two tests by which we judge reality. The two are the negative and positive aspects of one and the same principle. It is self-manifest. Descartes was right in so far as he pointed out that thinking implies a thinker (*cogito ergo sum*). Sankara's description of the self is a step in advance of Descartes. Descartes identifies self with one aspect of experience namely the experiencer. Sankara identifies the self with experience in all its aspects.

The path to Brahman-realization is not purely intellectual. Truth being a perfect orb we are bound to encompass it sooner or later. Intellectual methods might help us to reach Brahman sooner, but it does not follow from this that the melting of the heart in devotion or the dedication of self to service is any less important a method to reach Brahman. No spiritual pontiff can afford to declare a monopoly for Brahman-realization. Prescribed modes and paths are all right in their own place. They are merely



guides and should not dominate us. The great Advaita thinker Madhusudana has propounded that through Bhakti, Advaita realization can be had. It is intellectual bias that has led us to speak in disparaging terms about emotion. The central thesis of Professor MacMurray that emotion has a rationality of its own is not without its use to Advaita. There is merely an ancient and irrational prejudice against emotion and will. "The melting of the heart in love is not less noble than the expansion of it in wisdom and the transcendence of the gulf between the agent and his action is not less noteworthy than the transcendence between seer and seer in knowledge. The beatific vision may come through artistic as through intellectual channels and the truly moral man, who has lost all thought of himself in the narrow sense is not necessarily farther from realization than the artist or the philosopher. The utmost that an intellectual can claim is that in some cases he is a quicker guide." The significant contribution of post-Sankara thinkers to Advaita is that the philosophy of non-dualism should look for an "integrity of synthesis rather than an intellectual dominance."

The released soul in Advaita would be an artist in the supreme sense of the term. His activity in life would be free from the calculus of profit and loss. There would be no purposive calculation or mechanical impulsion for his act. His activities are the fruit of the play instinct. It is *lila*. He is not bound by the laws of safety. He needs no laws and is a law unto himself. There is nothing outside him, because he is the supreme spirit.



## 22. *Sankara's Contribution to World Philosophy*

SANKARA'S PHILOSOPHY of Advaita is the unique product of Indian philosophical thought. It is the most profound form of Absolute Idealism known to the world of thought. Sankara's absolutism is without a peer or parallel, without a before or an after. It is not a mere *mata* (view) but it is a *tattva*. Adopting the words of Lowes Dickinson we can say, "that the real antithesis is not between European philosophy and Indian systems, but between Advaita on the one hand and the rest of the world's philosophical systems on the other."

Sankara's Absolute, i.e., his Brahman is not a system nor an organism, nor a substance. Sankara establishes the existence of Brahman on the authority of the Sruti, his own spiritual experience and with the help of logic. As a philosopher he analyses experience and does not, like the Western thinkers, confine the term "experience" only to the object side but also includes the subject's thoughts. Further, he takes the comprehensive view of human experience, not only of the waking life, but also of the dream world and of the deep-sleep stage. His, is an integral approach to experience and not a truncated and partial one as of the West. Sankara finds that in experience the seer is one and constant, and the sights are shifting and many. His logic is based on the concept of identity. He has shown to the world of logicians, Indian and Western, that the concept of relation is self-discrepant and is in the end indefensible. Sankara's dialectics against the concepts of difference and his establishment of the basic nature of *abheda* (identity) is a logical feat that regales the



ardent lover of metaphysics and even at times baffles the expert. He conclusively proves to those students of Hegel, that identity is not dependent on difference; difference is dependent on identity. He also has dismissed the concept of identity-in-difference and has shown its weakness. The concept of the Nirguna Brahman is backed by a sound logic.

Sankara's theory that Brahman is Reality cuts at the root of all dualisms, mind and matter, world and spirit, the subject and the object. With the theory of the Universal Consciousness, it is easy and intelligible to explain how we can come to know objects in the world. We know them because they too are of the same Reality.

Sankara's description of the world as *maya* has to be carefully understood. He is pointing out to the world of philosophers that the various theories put forward to explain the world are unintelligible, when examined carefully. He finds that:

- (1) the creationist theory (*Arambha Vada*),
- (2) the transformation theory, which holds that the world is a transformation of Prakrti (*Parinama Vada*),
- (3) the theory that God himself transforms into the nature of the world (*Brahma Parinama Vada*),
- (4) the theory that the world is created out of nothing (*Sunya Vada*),
- (5) the theory which believes that the world is merely a cluster of ideas (*Vijnana Vada*)

are all not self-consistent and do not satisfy the requirements of logic. So he formulated his theory of *maya*. In short, it says, that the world is neither categorizable as the real nor as the absolutely unreal. It exists, but is not real. It is not the same as the dream world, nor is it a mere cluster of ideas as the subjective idealists hold. The doctrine of *maya* does not affect the world in any existential or epistemic matters. It only says it is not ultimately real. Uninformed and ill-informed critics at home and abroad have unnecessarily criticized the doctrine in a manner wholly irrelevant to the correct definition of the doctrine.

Sankara's Advaita has accorded enough place for the play of reason. He says, "Argue, but don't argue perversely" (*tarkyatam, ma kutarkyatam*). He knew the limitations and the non-conclusive nature of human reason. He was the logical opponent of



the logicians. He put spiritual experience as the ultimate test of truth. He declared with the freedom of a philosopher *par excellence*, "that the Vedas are merely *jnapakas* and not *karakas*" of spiritual life.

Sankara's philosophy is not a mere dry-as-dust system. True to the Indian definition of philosophy, he regards philosophy as the solution to end all our sorrows, strifes, tensions, disbeliefs and doubts. It is practical; it alone can give us eternal peace. When Sankara says that philosophy is pragmatic, it is not the pragmatism of the American philosopher James. It is not the view that truth is measured in terms of the practical, but it states that truth is the only guide for practice, that truth alone has efficacy as a guide for spiritual liberation.

Further, Sankara has effected the most magnificent synthesis between man and God. This dualism is not overcome even in the most glowing humanistic theisms. Man and God are forever different. Man is a creature, tied down to a body of lust, with no glimmer of divinity in him. If he is to be saved, it must be by God's grace. Sankara philosophically analyses the objective universe and finds that its reality is Brahman. Then he proceeds to analyse the self of man, dives deep into his several sheaths (*Kosas*) and finds that man is at bottom spirit. He then affirms the identity of the two. The epigrammatic formula of the Chandogya Upanishad, i.e., *tat twam asi* is explained thus by Sankara's philosophy.

Sankara was the first to affirm that *moksha* is native to the soul of man. It is for all. It can be realized here and now. The dignity of man and his native divinity have not been stressed in such a manner even by the modern existentialists. Sankara conceived that happiness is indivisible. We cannot have happiness for any of us until it is won for all.

The philosophical method Sankara advocated is open and broad. There is nothing private or non-intellectual about it. He stressed in no uncertain accents the glory and the importance of *jnana*. To us moderns, who are *children of reason and science*, there is no philosophy which satisfies the demands of logic and the needs of humanity more than that of Sankara. In a world where one half lacks a common faith and the other half has a faith (communism) imposed on it, the only hope is the rational religion of Sri Sankara.



## 23. *The Vedanta of Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda*

IN THE course of human history there have been repeated attempts to challenge and ridicule the claims of religion. The contemporary challenge is the most powerful and has influenced all sections of the community, the educated and the uneducated. The challenge takes up two lines of attack. The religious truths and categories like God, soul, immortality, sin, etc. are declared as unverifiable and unknowable through the ordinary modes of knowledge. They are dogmatic declarations, based on the facile imagination of men and have no existence in reality. Secondly, the practice of religion in the past and even today by several sects has produced untold misery to men. It is frankly anti-humanistic. Religions teach us to fly away from the social agonies of the age to mountain tops and monasteries. It has been indifferent to the welfare of men here and now. It has developed an escapist other-worldliness. The various dogmatic theologies of the world have degenerated into arrogant sects, and vie with one another in the art of competitive indoctrination of masses through all horrible methods. Each of these sects claim to be in exclusive possession of the truth and declare their rivals as heretics. It is the anti-rational and anti-humanistic nature of religion that has made the critics debunk it. Some have been exasperated by the exploitation of the ignorance of masses by the vested interest in religion. They declare, 'A militant atheism is better than a dishonest religion'.

The challenge is not without its truth. It is not conclusive. The challenge has been accepted by the great saints of the world



in every generation. Particularly in India, there has been no age when the representative of the authentic religion did not appear. Sri Ramakrishna is our great *rsi*. He is an illustrious example of the mystical tradition (perennial philosophy) which runs right through the religious history of this country from the days of the Rg-Veda. In the words of Romain Rolland 'he is the consummation of the two thousand years of spiritual life of three hundred million people'. He is a branch of the true vine. 'He did not come to destroy or fulfil but to bear testimony'. He did not speak like a scribe from his books or as a bespectacled scholar from his research thesis. He spoke from his authentic religious experience. His message is faithful to the past, full of possibilities for the future, deeply rooted in our national consciousness, thoroughly representative of the authentic and true in religion. He is the starting point of the renaissance of Hinduism. This illiterate temple priest did not take anything on trust. He is the unwearied experimenter of all religions and forms of worship. He had been initiated into Tantric, Vaisnava, and Vedanta methods of spiritual discipline. He then practised with success the Islamic and the Christian forms of spiritual life. After a full and vivid first-hand personal experience, he declared the 'unity of all religions' and 'fellowship of all faiths'. This is the corner stone of the religion we need. Ramakrishna says, "I have had to practise all the religions once, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity, and I have walked the path of different denominations of Hinduism again—of Sakta, Vaisnava, Vedanta, and other sects. I have found that it is the same God towards whom all are travelling, only they are coming through diverse ways."

This declaration of the Paramahansa sums up the true character of the spiritual religion of India. The centre of religion has shifted from authority, church, and scriptures to spiritual experience. It alone, affirms the truth of religion. This way of looking at religion makes it rational and non-dogmatic. It deals a final blow to all that stands between God and man.

The fact of spiritual realization discloses the truth that the different religions of the world aim at one and the same God. The quest is the same for all. The goal is the same. The way to it differs from religion to religion. The language, the mode of presentation, the dogmas, the rituals, etc., differ, because of the differences in the psychological temper of men. All religions are



pathways to God. None need run down any or seek to convert others. Each should grow to his best. Some of us are attracted by the 'way of devotion', and others incline to the 'way of knowledge', some choose the 'way of devotion', and others incline to the 'way of deeds'.

The fellowship of faiths, the fundamental oneness of all religions takes the fangs away from the acts of bigots. It engenders a universal toleration, an active love and charity to all fellow men. It removes the ills of religion, hatred and strife, conversion, crusades, and inquisition. Sage Ramakrishna lived and practised equally all faiths and had tolerance for all denominations. There was no air of condescension in the sage's behaviour to different religions.

Like all the great world teachers, he too speaks in parables. He uses the parable with a remarkable skill for the teaching of morals. The didactic purposes are put through simple observations full of worldly wisdom with a tinge of quaint humour. His direct teaching, homely argument attracted all to his fold.

For the first time Max Muller gave him the title of the Mahatma in an article in the Nineteenth Century. Max Muller has himself collected the sayings of Ramakrishna. Sri Rajagopalachari has styled Ramakrishna's sayings as an Upanishad.

Referring to the nature of the ultimate Reality as personal and impersonal, Ramakrishna said: "A dyer used to dye his dresses in a special manner. He used to ask his customer, 'How would you like me to dye your dress?' If the customer answered red, the dyer dipped the dress in a vat and then took it out saying, 'Here is your dress dyed red.' Another wanted yellow, the dyer dipped the cloth in the same vat and took it out, lo! it was yellow. Also for other colours he used the same vat, obtaining different results. A customer who had noticed all this, told the dyer, 'My friend, I have no preference for any particular colour. I would like mine to be dyed in the colour you are dyed.' The Lord now shows Himself in one form, now in another, and sometimes in no form, always according to the needs of the devotee. Only the divine Dyer knows in what colour He Himself is dyed." The spiritual experience is the same but the creedal formulations are relative to the minds of men, therefore different.

Ramakrishna brings out the true characteristic of Indian philosophy, namely, that it is not merely an intellectual exercise, but



an integral transformation. It is not mere speculative enjoyment. He says, "Learning—books on philosophy, grammar, etc., only hinder and puzzle the mind, 'the granthas' (books) are only 'granthis' (knots). Mere speculation is of no use. An almanac foretells heavy rains, but no matter however much you squeeze the book, not one drop of water will come out of it."

Ramakrishna gives us the fundamental tenets of the eternal gospel. Religion is one. The followers of a living faith are guided and illumined by one light. We are all pilgrims to the same light.

To enter the spiritual life, we must first purify ourselves, through the practice of charity and devotion to the Lord, in utter sincerity. Purity and ethical excellence are absolutely necessary. Ethical life purges us of our egoism and ennobles us to have an all-embracing love of God. Love of God transforms into unstinted service and charity towards our fellow men. Humanism, to be effective, must be rooted in religion. The Katha Upanishad declares, 'not he who has not desisted from evil ways, not he who is not tranquil, not he who has not a concentrated mind, not even he whose mind is not composed can reach the Lord through right knowledge.'

Divine love is the result of the good life. Sri Ramakrishna was once asked when shall the 'I' be free, his pithy answer was when the 'I' shall cease to be. There you have in a nutshell the great mystic doctrine of 'self-naughting' as the means of salvation. The Crucifixion must precede Resurrection.

Ramakrishna never dwelt upon the vileness of man's mortal nature, and the enormity of his sin. He declared that God and man are organic. Man is not a fallen creature tied down to a body of lust without any glimmer of divinity.

Vivekananda's definition of religion sums up the point: "Religion is the manifestation of the Divinity already in man. Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this Divinity by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy, by one or more or all of these—and be free. This is the whole of religion." The optimistic note of Ramakrishna's Vedanta emphasizes the dignity and divinity of man.

The message of Ramakrishna is spread by Vivekananda in three continents. He introduced the missionary zeal and dyna-



mic drive necessary for religion to make it a reality. He imparted to the monistic Vedanta of Sankara a practical shape by emphasizing the positive aspect. He called it practical Vedanta. He realized God in all. This realization he sought to translate through the Ramakrishna Mission and its service in different fields—education, medical service, social work, etc.

He made the famous declaration "that an empty stomach is no good for religion." He repeatedly said, "Cease to look upon every little village superstition as a mandate of the Vedas." 'I do not believe in a God or religion that cannot wipe the widow's tears and bring a piece of bread to the orphan's mouth.' He said that his master stood for 'man-making religion,' and education. He wrote, 'For our motherland a synthesis of the two great systems, Hinduism and Islam—Vedantic brain and Islamic body—is the only hope.' On another occasion he declared that our great national sin was the neglect of the masses; that it was one of the causes of our fall in the past, and that if we continued the neglect the result would not be different. There can be no happiness for any of us until it is won for all.

Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement has restored the true meaning of the Vedanta. It is the religion we need. It is catholic in outlook, universal in application, and humanistic in practice. It declares that religion can never absolve us from our duty. True religion is the basis of character. It satisfies the demand of the intellect and the needs of humanity. Some of our erstwhile agnostics like Aldous Huxley are among its admirers today.

The religion of Ramakrishna is the urgent need of India and humanity. In the philosophy of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda we have the splendid example of a new orientation of the monistic philosophy of Sankara. It emphasizes the identity of worship and service. The movement has introduced a missionary zeal and imparted to the monistic Vedanta a practical shape through the service of man as God. The Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement is the source of inspiration to all the savants of Indian humanity. In the field of philosophy and religion Radhakrishnan and Aurobindo have been considerably influenced by Vivekananda. In the field of politics many have been influenced to make a religion of practical politics by the inspiration of the Paramahansa's message.

In an over-organized world like ours, the only possible way to



keep away from the attritions of time is the companionship of great mystics like Ramakrishna. They are, in the words of Aldous Huxley, the salt of the earth. If they are not there, there is nothing to keep our earth disinfected, nothing to prevent it from falling to decay. The mystics are the channels through which a little knowledge flows down into our human universe of ignorance and illusion. A totally unmystical world would be a world totally blind and insane.

To an unbelieving world, based on untruth and lovelessness, with its alarming developments of nuclear weapons of destruction, given over to power and pelf, Sri Ramakrishna has given the gospel, that true religion is a force and not a mere form. It is our inward power that helps us to overcome failure, fear, and frustration. The need of the world is that type of religion which has been preached by the great sage.

"The world revolveth not round the inventors of new noises, but it revolveth inaudibly round the inventors of new ideas."



## 24. Essential Hinduism

*"Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?  
Where is the knowledge we have lost in  
information?"*

*The cycles of Heaven in twenty centuries  
Bring us further from God and nearer to dust."*

—T. S. ELIOT

*"More than any other religion, it is a quest of TRUTH and not a CREED, which must necessarily become antiquated. It admits the possibility of new scriptures, new incarnations and new institutions. It has no quarrel with knowledge or speculation; perhaps it excludes the materialists because they have no common ground with religion, but it tolerates Sankhya which has nothing to say about God or worship. It is truly dynamic and in the past whenever it has seemed in danger of withering it has never failed to bud with new life and put forth new bud."*

—SIR CHARLES ELLIOT  
(*Hinduism and Buddhism*)

HINDUISM IS the name of an 'integrated outlook' on life set forth by the scriptures of India. It is not only a view of life but also a way of life. It has a very impressive ancestry which goes back as far as four thousand years. It has an unbroken continuity of its exemplars in every age, who carried conviction to the masses by the examples of their lives and teaching. This continuity



has persisted despite mighty opposition, political revolutions, social upheavals and foreign invasions. It has exhibited a sound instinct for life, a strong vitality and staying power all its own. It has assimilated much that has come its way, and has grown in its richness.

Though it is fascinated by several aspects of modern thought and civilization, it is not subjugated to any and has never ceased to be itself. It has built a culture round itself. A spiritual view and man's imperative need for it are the essential tenets of Hinduism. The recognition of the reality of the Spirit, its existence in the space-time world and man's effort to serve God in the souls of men are organic to the doctrines of Hinduism. The spiritual outlook of Hinduism is fostered by the 'vision of the seers, the vigil of the saints, the speculation of philosophers and the imagination of the poets and the artists'.

Essential Hinduism recognizes the common ground acceptable to all religious traditions that is not repugnant to our ethical sense. It makes for religious unity and understanding. Gandhiji towards the end of his life referred to two Hinduisms: There is the hideous, distorted Hinduism with its untouchability, superstitious worship of stocks and stones, animal sacrifice, enslavement of women, etc. The second Hinduism is the essential one. It is the Hinduism of the Gita, Upanishads and Yoga Sutras. It is in this Hinduism the students of comparative religion have found universality. Swami Vivekananda often used to say, "Cease to look upon every little village superstition as a mandate of the Vedas."

In a very significant passage the French Orientalist, Louis Renon, explains to us the nature of Hinduism. He writes, "The troubles of the present age, which are rightly or wrongly attributed to western materialism, have helped to increase the prestige of Hinduism. Some people see it as the authentic survival of a tradition, or rather, of the one tradition, and make it the basis of their *philosophia perennis*. Others try to incorporate in it a universal religious syncretism. Whether these attempts will succeed must be left for the future to decide. The fact remains that Hinduism provides an incomparable field of study for the historian of religion; its aberrations are many but there is in it a great stream of mystical power; it manifests all the conceptions of religion, and its speculation is continually revealing them in a



new light. It combines power of constant renewal with a firm conservancy of fundamental tradition.”<sup>1</sup>

Today there is a growing recognition that there is a large area of agreement between the different religions of the world. There is no use pounding the husk leaving the grain. This area of agreement is the core of religion, the rest is husk. The realization of the common substratum, i.e. the essentiality in different religions will remove the atmosphere of fear, suspicion and jealousy among them. It will promote the fellowship among faiths.

Arnold Toynbee writes that he would “express his personal belief that the four higher religions that were alive in the age in which he was living were four variations on a single theme and that, if the four components of this heavenly music of the spheres could be audible on each simultaneously, and with equal clarity to one pair of human ears, the happy hearer would find himself listening, not to a discord but to a harmony.”<sup>2</sup>

The catholic-minded historian writes in his tenth volume: ‘I have come back to a belief that Religion holds the key to the mystery of existence; but I have not come back to the belief that this key is in the hands of my ancestral religion exclusively . . . The Indian religions are not exclusive-minded. They are ready to allow that there may be alternative approaches to the mystery. I feel sure that in this they are right, and that this catholic-minded Indian religious spirit is the way of salvation for all religions in an age in which we have to learn to live as a single family if we are not to destroy ourselves.’<sup>3</sup>

The Hindu mind is not without a central point of view. A respected friend of mine observed that Hinduism is not a country without a capital. It believes in the authority of scriptures as a working hypothesis. It affirms religious truths on the strength of the testimony of religious experience. It declares that ultimate Reality is one and indeterminate. It also proclaims that all the descriptions of ultimate Reality are equally true and none is completely and exclusively true. Each religious description is the empirical manifestation of Reality, according to a particular view-point and temperament. Hinduism makes for the fellowship

---

1. Louis Renon, *Religions in Ancient India*, p. 110.

2. Toynbee, *A Story of History*, VII, p. 428.

3. Toynbee, *A Story of History*, Vol. X, p. 238.



of faiths and asserts the fundamental oneness of Reality.<sup>4</sup> This central principle is responsible for its tolerance, which is an article of its faith, and is not a stroke of policy with the Hindus.

Another significant doctrine of the essential Hinduism is its affirmation of the dignity and of the divinity of man. Man is not regarded as the antithesis of God. He is not described as being tied down to a body of lust without any glimmer of divinity. He has different layers and many levels in his being. By ceremonial purity and ethical excellence he can transcend the limits of creaturely existence and realize God.

The emergence of this higher consciousness is the purpose of religion. Man alone is capable of this effort. Commenting on a passage in the Taittiriya Upanishad, Sankara asks the question: Why are we so mindful of man when we know that everything is Brahman? He then answers that man is important. What does his importance consist in? The answer is that man is capable of knowledge and responsible action.<sup>5</sup> Man, though he lives in the world of change and chance, still is capable of transcending it and getting the vision of Eternity. He is the point where Eternity and Time intersect.

Further, essential Hinduism asserts that this realization can be had here and now and not always in a distant future after death. Religion is the most powerful instrument of social regeneration. The Hindu view of life does not mistrust reason. It transcends reason and realizes its limitations. The faith of the Hindu is not the blind belief in a dogma, church, ritual, or book, or a prophet, but the experiential awareness of Reality. The experience is explained in terms of reason. "There is no final breach between the two powers, reason and intuition."

The social philosophy of Hinduism makes for human happiness, guarantees moral responsibility, affirms human freedom, increases the hope of man. Above all, it provides ample room for spiritual perfection and social harmony. This is achieved by doctrines of karma, rebirth, svadharma, varna, and asrama dharma.

---

4. *Isvara allah tere nama mandira masjid a tere dhama sabko Sanmati de Bhagavan*—Guru Govind Singh.

5. Sankara on Taittiriya, III.

*Sarvesam apyannarasa-vikaratva Brahma-vamsyatte ca avisiste, kasmat purusa eva grhyate? Pradhanyat, kim punah Pradhanyam? Karma Jnanadhikarat.*



The social philosophy effects co-ordination and avoids social waste.

There is no mechanical oppression of one pattern or rule of life for all. Each grows to his best according to the law of his development. The consummation of all values is moksha. Dharma is moksha in the making. It is the kingdom of God on earth. All other values should subserve moksha and be regulated by dharma.

For our age, no religion that does not satisfy the demands of reason and the requirements of humanity can help us to get over our fears. We need a religion that gives us selfmastery and helps us to cultivate simple goodness in our life. We need a religion that promotes social coherence and uses all our power for the good of humanity. Such is the spirit of essential Hinduism.

Such has also been the message of Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. They have shown it by the way they lived and taught. Their teachings enable us to see, amidst all the conflict and confusion of our age, the emerging outlines of Essential Hinduism—the ground-plan of the Temple in which we and our friends are destined to pray.



## 25. *Influence of the West on Indian Philosophy*

INDIAN PHILOSOPHICAL thought has been helped a great deal to come into its own not solely by the work of Indian philosophers, but also by a host of eminent orientalist from the West. From the moment Sanskrit was discovered by them, some of them have rendered yeoman service in reviving the great and perennial elements of thought in Indian philosophical classics. Successive generations of European and American orientalist have dedicated their life and energy to the different useful tasks of editing, compiling, and translating the basic Indian texts. The work of edition is not easy in view of the different manuscripts and variant readings. However several oriental societies have done this work.

The great names that come up before one's mind are too many to be named. The chief among them are Max Muller, Thibaut, Oldenburg, Jacobi, Venis, Cowell, Stocherbatsky, Winternitz, Bloomfield, Hopkins, Roth, Rhys Davids, Lanman, Warren, Woods, Hume, Macdonell, Keith, Poussin, Tucci, Edgerton and others. Besides editing and translating the works, some of them have written independent expositions of the different systems of Indian philosophy. There are two types of expositions: (1) the bare exposition with an eye to define clearly the different doctrines and not to deviate from the meaning of the texts.

The second type of expositions in English indulged in comparisons with Western systems of thought. Parallel thoughts with Western ideas are brought to light. It is the comparative method. The pure expository method was followed by Prof. Hiriyanna



and the comparative method was set into vogue by the doyen among philosophers, Dr S. Radhakrishnan. The comparative method must be used with great care. The comparative method has given an insight into the area of agreement between the different systems and also a penetrative vision of the living significance of the Indian philosophical concepts. With these two types of expositions, Indian philosophy entered the period of systematic and scientific study.

The role of the orientalist had a very great influence on the Indian mind. Indian humanity, particularly the intellectual class, reacted in one of three ways to the impact of foreign ideas and Western education, through the medium of the English language. A particular section who were fascinated and overpowered by Western ideas were completely subjugated by them. They were not only shaken but shattered by the dazzling influence of Western ideas. Science and technology added to the prestige of the Western ideas, and we have a class of men who were uprooted and became slavish imitations of the West and rendered abject flattery to everything.

The conservative section who did not allow themselves to be influenced by Western education kept themselves away. They were ignorant of the medium, the English language, and that kept their thoughts uninfluenced. So they did not allow their thoughts to rationally confront the Western ideas. Political suzerainty of the British and the dependence of Indians made them lose confidence in their masters. So they assimilated none of the British ideas.

A third section of men in India who were not entirely rootless, who were also fascinated by Western ideas, but did not allow themselves to be shattered, or completely subjugated by them. They assimilated Western ideas and re-thought the Indian philosophical thoughts into new patterns. This section constitutes the group of contemporary Indian philosophers, e.g. Gandhiji, Tagore, Aurobindo, Radhakrishnan and several others. It is undeniable that the works of the orientalist have roused the drooping faith of Indians in their own philosophical heritage.

Contemporary Indian philosophers are influenced by Western thought in the formulation of their systems of philosophy and their outlook of the world. Western philosophical systems have



impressed contemporary Indian philosophers in the following aspects :

- (1) That philosophical systems must be growing, dynamic, and living, keeping pace with scientific development and the social trends of the times.
- (2) A sense of chronology and history is insisted on.

The historical method helps us to trace the basic laws, the rhythms of the development of human thought, its universal constants, its troughs and crests in the evolution of thoughts.

- (3) Revolt against authority and the non-acceptance of a thing on mere authority.
- (4) The stress on social problems, i.e. the emphasis on the humanist elements in life, "a reverence for life" in Schweitzer's words—a life-affirmation attitude.

Contemporary Indian philosophers have shown originality in different forms. Some have shown originality in the bare presentation, bringing all the details into an ordered pattern as to be significant. In the process of the presentation unnoticed significance of certain concepts and their correlation to other concepts is thrown into relief. Another type of originality is interpreting afresh the eternal problems of philosophy—substance, causation, negation, coherence or correspondence.

Yet another variety of originality consists in giving the world a philosophical system which seeks to meet the difficulties and the crises of the age.

A. E. Taylor writes : "There are two qualities which we may fairly demand from the work of any man whom we are to recognise as really a great philosopher with a permanent importance in the history of human thought. In the first place the work must be original and in the second it must be critical. When I say the work must be original I do not mean it must be startling or revolutionary but that it must be the achievement of a genuine personal intellectual effort. The great philosopher must be one who has thought for himself and has thought hard . . . And by saying that the work must be critical, I do not mean that it must necessarily be largely devoted to criticism of other men's thoughts, I mean it must be something more than a cons-



truction of a brilliant but undisciplined speculative imagination." Judged by this test many an Indian thinker is original.

The spirituality which forgets to recognize humanity becomes a dry, abstract, empty speculation. The spirit must give itself existence in the human self.

Scientific Humanism of the West ignores the eluding aspect of human personality, i.e. the spiritual dimension. They reduce man to the level of an organism or a machine and fail to notice his inwardness. Lord Russell writes, "Asia must come to the rescue of the world, by causing western inventiveness to subserve human ends instead of the basic craving of suppression and cruelty, to which it has been prostituted by the dominant nations of the present day."

Dean Inge pleads for the synthesis of the East and the West: "It is a reproach to us, that with our unique opportunities of entering into sympathetic relations with Indian thought, we have made very few attempts to do so. I am not suggesting that we should become Buddhists or Hindus, but I believe that we have almost as much to learn from them as they from us."



...of which the most important specimens are ...  
 judged by the fact that in Indian history is ...

The ... which ...  
 ...

... of the ...  
 ...

... of the ...  
 ...

... of the ...  
 ...

... of the ...  
 ...

... of the ...  
 ...

... of the ...  
 ...

... of the ...  
 ...

... of the ...  
 ...

... of the ...  
 ...

... of the ...  
 ...

... of the ...  
 ...

... of the ...  
 ...

... of the ...  
 ...

... of the ...  
 ...

... of the ...  
 ...

... of the ...  
 ...



## Index

- ABSOLUTE, 10, 94-5, 106, 142, 160  
 Absolute equality, 57  
 Absolutism, 113  
 Accidentalism, 95  
 Acton, Lord, 37  
 Adhyatmasastra, 25  
 Adita, 96  
 Advaita (Sankara's), 20, 25, 143-7,  
     150-2, 154, 157-61  
 Agni, 94-7  
 Ahimsa, 87-91  
*Aitareya* (Upanishad), 100  
 Akura, 116  
 Ambarisha, 115  
 Ambrose, St., 11  
 Ananda Vardhana, 120  
*Anargha Raghava*, 120  
 Anasuya, 122  
 Anuradhapura, 33  
 Aranyakas, 93  
 Aristotelian Society, 3  
 Aristotle, 34, 38  
 Arjuna, 54, 89, 110, 130-1, 137  
 Arnold, Matthew, 57  
*Artha Sastra*, 56  
 Arya Samaj, 21  
 Ashrama dharma, 172  
 Ashrama dharmas, 68  
 Ashvins, 33  
 Asthika darshanas, 23, 92  
 Aswagosa, 70  
 Aswatthama, 110  
 Atheism, 45, 163  
 Atman, 34, 51, 75, 106, 113, 117  
 Aurelius, Marcus, 60  
 Aurobindo, 13, 17, 24, 55, 72, 97,  
     127-9, 134, 167, 175  
     organic view of reality, 21  
 Avantivarman, King, 128  
 Avatara, 109  
 Ayer, Professor, 4  
 Ayodhya, 123  
 BALIYAGNANA, 62  
 Barth, Karl, 7  
 Berdyaev, 6  
 Bergson, 6, 41  
 Besent, 134  
*Bhagavad Gita*, 82, 89, 108, 127  
*Bhagavata*, 108-13, 115, 117  
     See *Bhagavata Purana*  
*Bhagavata Dharmas*, 113  
     *Bhagavata Purana*, 57, 114, 116  
 Bhagavatas, 109, 112-3  
 Bhakta, 108, 114, 116, 126, 136  
 Bhakti, 36, 106, 108-9, 112, 114-7,  
     126, 132, 135, 138, 159  
 Bhandarkar, Dr., 107  
 Bhandarkar Oriental Institute, 51  
 Bharata, 123  
*Bharata*, 127  
     See *Mahabharata*  
 Bhartrihari, 54  
 Bhavabhuti, 120  
 Bheda srutis, 154  
 Bhishma, 116



- Bhishma Parva, 127  
 Bhrgu, 46, 104  
 Bible, 114  
 Bloomfield, 174  
 Borobudur, 33  
 Bosanquet, 156  
 Bradley, 3, 9, 69, 155  
 Brahma, 120-1  
 Brahman, 12, 18, 20, 34, 46, 47, 75, 94, 99, 104, 105, 110-1, 143-58, 160-2, 172  
*Brahmana*, 93  
*Brahmanas*, 93, 144-5  
 Brahmans, 75  
*Brahma Parinama Vada*, 161  
 Brahma Siddhi, 144  
 Brahmo Samaj, 21  
*Brhadaranyaka*, 28, 79, 90, 100, 106  
     commentary on the, 143  
 Bruno, 84  
 Buddha, Gautama the, 23, 72, 77, 79, 139-42, 145-6  
 Buddhism, 14, 23, 28, 33, 77, 139-40, 145-6  
 Buddhists, 70, 145, 177  
  
 CARVAKA, 79, 85  
     school, 23  
 Caste system  
     four-fold, 36  
 Cathari, 84  
*Chandogya Sruti*, 154  
*Chandogya Upanishad*, 73, 100, 103, 162  
     commentary on, 143  
 Chide, V. Gordan, 32  
 Christ, 59  
 Christianity, 51, 164  
 Collingwood, R. G., 5  
 Communism, 162  
 Cowell, 174  
 Creationist theory (*Arambha Vada*), 147, 161  
  
 DARSANAS, 14, 43  
 Dasaratha, 122, 124  
 Davids, Rhys, 174  
  
 Death  
     fear of, 8, 9  
     Lord of, 112  
 Democracy, 57  
 Descartes, 44, 46, 158  
 Desires, 53-5, 58-60, 74, 79, 113  
 Detachment, 16, 49, 50, 87, 111-2, 116, 123, 134  
 Deussen, 94, 105  
 Devotion, 116, 166  
     nine forms of, 114  
*Dharma*, 8, 9, 29, 48-51, 53-4, 57, 59, 61, 64-71, 73-4, 88, 97, 112, 122-5, 127, 130-1, 173  
*Dharmasastras*, 64-5, 67  
*Dharmatma*, 69, 121-2  
*Dharmic Society*, 57  
*Dhritarastra*, 131  
 Dhruva, 116  
 Dickenson, G. Lowes, 83, 84, 160  
 Dikshit, Nilakanta, 54  
 Dualism, 23, 44, 47, 162  
 Dualisms, 161  
 Durrant, Will, 63  
 Duryodhana, 89, 131  
  
 EDGERTON, 128, 174  
 Eglinton, John, 100  
*Ekajivva vada*, 152  
 Eleucian (creed), 97  
 Ellis, Havelock, 63  
 Emerson, 100  
 Empedocles, 84  
 Etienne-Gilson, 7  
 Existentialism, 7  
 Existentialists, 162  
  
 FENELON, 111  
 Fifth Veda, 69  
     see *Mahabharata*  
 Freud, 74  
 Fundamentalism, 7  
  
 GAJENDRA, 116  
 Gandhi, 17, 57, 89, 90, 170, 175  
     trusteeship theory of property, 55



- Gandhi, Mahatma, 87, 101, 129  
   religious philosophy of, 21  
   see Gandhi
- Ganges, 110, 121, 128
- Garuda Purana*, 80
- Gaudapada, 144
- Gautama, 76
- Ghosh, Sri Aurobindo, 120  
   see Aurobindo
- Gifford lectures of St. Andrews, 3
- Gita*, 16-7, 20, 36, 49, 50, 57, 59-61, 68, 76, 85, 99, 100, 106, 122, 128-38, 143, 170
- God, 3, 4, 15, 17-21, 49, 50, 76, 79, 80, 113-4, 117, 133, 137-8, 142, 161-7, 170, 172  
   kingdom of, 111, 173
- God-realization, 132-3  
   three methods of, 36
- Goethe, 84, 100
- Griffith, Principal, 121
- HANUMAN 126
- Harsha, 33
- Hastings, Warren, 137
- Heard, Gerald, 57
- Hebrews, 84
- Hegel, 11, 15, 34, 106  
   students of, 161
- Hemachandra, 13
- Henotheism, 94
- Herder, 84
- Hindu, 36, 57, 60, 91  
   Dharma, 108  
   ethics, 57-8, 68, 88-9  
   mind, 57, 67-8, 171  
   moral ideal, 64  
   Rajya Dharma, 88  
   religion, 89  
   scheme of society, 37  
   social institutions, 68  
   social life, 66  
   social philosophy, 57  
   social thinkers, 62  
   spirituality, 56, 63  
   theory of punishment, 89  
   thought 56, 73-4  
   tradition, 13  
   view of life, 172
- Hinduism, 21, 35, 49, 53, 58, 60-2, 87, 101, 108, 129, 164, 167, 169, 172  
   Essential, 173
- Hindu Law  
   digests of, 65
- Hindus, 18, 37, 56, 61, 64, 70, 73, 93, 97, 101, 121, 172, 177
- Hiriyanna, Prof., 23, 29, 42, 51, 119, 134, 174
- Hopkins, 107, 174
- Hume, 4, 174
- Huxley, Aldous, 16, 137, 167-8
- Hyslop, 85
- IDOLATRY, 92
- Ignorance (*avidya*), 41, 75, 99, 103, 153
- Iliad*, 121
- Immortality, 4, 103, 163
- Indra, 33, 94-6, 104
- Inge, Dean, 177
- Isa* (upanishad), 100, 102  
   see *Isopanishad*
- Isavasya*, 101
- Isherwood, Christopher, 108, 137
- Islam, 164, 167
- Islamic (form of spiritual life), 164
- Isopanishad*, 101
- Isvara, 44, 86, 153, 158
- JABALI, 123
- Jacobi, 174
- Jadabharatha, 116
- Jaimini, 20
- Jainism, 14, 23, 28, 77, 87
- Jains, 87
- James (American philosopher), 162  
   see James, William
- James, William, 73
- Jivanmuktas*, 18, 29
- Jivanmukti*, 75, 105, 158
- KABBALA, 84
- Kadambari* (Bana's), 128
- Kaegi, Adolf, 95
- Kaileyi, 124
- Kaivalya*, 77
- Kalidasa, 52, 55, 67, 119

- Kanada, 10  
 Kane, Mahamahopadhyaya P. V., 65-6  
 Kanishka, 33  
 Kant, 3, 6, 14, 34, 50, 69, 85  
 Kapila, 10  
*Karma*, 18, 30, 36, 77, 79-83, 93, 95, 132, 135, 144, 172  
 Karma-kanda, 93, 97  
 Karma Samnyasa, 49  
 Karma-yoga, 127, 129, 132-6  
 Karma-yogi, 132, 135-6  
*Katha*, 12, 28, 59, 100, 104, 106, 166  
 Kausalya, 122  
 Kautilya, 56  
 Keith, 80, 174  
*Kena* (upanishad), 100  
 Krishna, Lord, 5, 61, 68, 89, 108-10, 137  
 Ksatriya-dharma, 123  
 Kuchela, 116  
 Kumarila, 85  
 Kunti, 116  
  
 LAKSHMANA, 54, 122  
 Lanman, 174  
 Law of causation, 79  
 Law of Karma, 18, 79, 80, 133, 141  
 Lessing, 84  
 Levi, Sylvain, 33  
*Lilavada*, 105  
 Logical positivism, 4, 7, 39  
 Logical Positivists, 5, 39  
  
 MACBETH, 86  
 Macdonell, 174  
 Mackenzie, J. S., 40, 43  
 MacMurray, Professor, 159  
 Madhusudana, 159  
 Madhva, 20, 44, 93, 97, 127, 146  
*Mahabharata*, 29, 54, 55, 66, 69, 87, 88, 91, 109, 121, 127  
 Mahavira, 23, 72  
 Mahayana (school), 142  
 Maitreyi, 103  
*Malavikagnimitra*, 52  
 Malraux, 7  
 Mandana, 144, 154-6  
  
*Mandukya* (Upanishad), 100  
 commentary on the, 144  
 Manu, 52, 56, 57, 60, 64, 65, 87, 88, 97  
 Marica, 122  
 Maritain, Jacques, 7  
 Martin, Kingsley, 130  
*Maya*, 18, 20, 25, 61, 75, 104, 149, 150, 153, 161  
*Mayavada*, 105  
 Menander, 140  
*Milindapanha*, 140  
*Mimamsa*, 14, 17, 20, 23, 44, 77, 92, 144  
 Prabhakara school of, 29, 50, 68  
*Mimamsaka*, 76  
 Mimamsakas, 25, 42, 144  
 doctrine of the, 69  
 Prabhakara school of the, 20  
*Mind* (Cambridge Journal), 3  
 Mitanni, 33  
 Mitra, 33, 95  
*Moksha*, 8, 9, 17-8, 23-8, 30-1, 49-52, 54, 58, 64, 69, 72-8, 103, 110, 127, 156, 162, 173  
 Monism, 23, 105  
 Monotheism, 23  
 Moore, 3, 4  
*Mukta*, 52, 72-3  
 Muller, Max, 14, 25, 99, 165, 174  
*Mundaka*, 12, 28, 100, 103  
 Murari, 120  
  
 NACIKETAS, 85, 103  
 Nagasena, 140  
 Narada, 102, 109, 114  
 Narayana, 97  
*Nasadiya Sukta*, 94  
 Nastika darshanas, 23  
 Nescience, 150-3, 156-8  
 See *Maya*  
*New Lights on the Most Ancient East*, 32  
 "New Statesman and Nation", 130  
*Nibandhas*, 65, 68  
*Nirguna Brahman*, 20, 113, 161  
 Nirvana, 77  
 Niyoga system, 65



- Nyaya, 14, 17-9, 23-5, 44, 77  
     logic, 76  
     school, 50, 76, 147  
*Nyaya-vaishika*, 76  
*Odessey*, 121  
 Oedipus complex, 83  
 Oldenburg, 174  
 Origin, 84  
 Orphic (creed), 97  
  
*Padma* (Purana), 128  
 Pandava clan, 110  
 Panini's grammar, 92  
 Pantheism, 94, 105  
 Paramahansa, 164  
     See Sri Ramakrishna  
*Parama purushartha*, 23  
*Paramapurusharthas*, 49  
*Para-vidya*, 101  
 Parikshit, 109, 110  
 Parjanya, 81  
 Patanjali, 19, 92  
     Yogasutras of, 36  
     Yoga system of, 16, 19, 77  
 Philo, 84  
 Philosopher, 2  
     ideal, 5  
 Philosophers, 4, 11  
     European, 39  
     Indian, 12, 174, 176  
     of the west, 6  
     Oxford, 5  
     traditional, 3, 5  
 Philosophy, 2-8, 14-5, 25  
     concept of, 1, 13  
     European, 160  
     Hindu, 37  
     history or, 11  
     Indian, 9, 10, 14, 18, 20, 22-7, 29,  
         31, 38, 40-2, 44, 49, 51, 72-3,  
         77, 144, 165, 174-5  
     Indian conception of, 8  
     Indian concept of, 7  
     Indian definition of, 162  
     in the west, 25  
     perennial, 79, 137, 164  
     purpose of, 72  
     Sankara's, 162  
     Systematic, 1  
     systems of, 11, 14, 17  
     unsystematic, 1  
     Vedic, 95  
     Western, 38-9  
     Western conception of, 6  
*Pitris*, 62  
 Plato, 5, 6, 8, 14, 34, 38, 59, 70, 84,  
     85  
 Plotinus, 8  
 Polytheism, 94, 95  
 Poussin, 174  
 Prabhakara, 50  
 Prabhavananda, Swami, 137  
*Pracchanna Bauddha*, 146  
     See Sankara  
 Prahlada, 114, 116  
 Prajapathi, 104  
*Prakrti*, 19, 25, 44, 45, 77, 132, 161  
*Prashna* (Upanishad), 100  
 Purva-mimamsa, 92, 145  
 Pythagoras, 84  
  
 RADHAKRISHNAN, 7, 31, 41, 46, 67,  
     84, 106, 129, 134, 145, 167, 175  
     idealism of, 21  
 Raghavan, Dr. V., 128  
*Raghuvamsa*, 119  
 Rajagopalachari, 165  
*Rajataranhini* (Kalhana's), 128  
 Rama, 69, 70, 118-26  
 Ramakrishna, 108, 164-8, 173  
 Ramakrishna Mission, 167  
 Ramakrishna - Vivekananda move-  
     ment, 21, 167  
 Ramanuja, 20, 44, 76, 93, 106, 125,  
     127, 146  
*Ramayana*, 54, 60, 69, 70, 119, 120,  
     121, 125  
 Rebirth, 30, 51, 84-5, 172  
 Reincarnation, 82-3, 85-6  
 Renaissance, 84  
 Renon, Louis, 170  
 Renunciation, 16, 62, 105, 131,  
     134-5  
*Republic*, 70  
 Resurrection, 166  
*Rg bhasya*, 97  
*Rg Veda*, 164

- Ris*, 62  
*Rishis*, 23  
*Rolland, Romain*, 164  
*Roth*, 174  
*Rta*, 95, 96  
*Rtasyagopa*, 96  
*Russell, Lord*, 3, 4, 177  
  
*Sadharana dharma*, 67  
*Sadharana dharmas*, 87  
*Saivate*, 118  
*Sakta*, 164  
*Samaveda*, 132  
*Samhita*, 93  
*Samhitas*, 93  
*Sanatkumara*, 102  
*Sankara*, 7, 10, 18, 20, 27-8, 45-6, 50, 69, 75, 79, 80, 89, 93, 99, 102, 104-5, 113, 127-8, 143-9, 152, 156-8, 160, 162, 172  
     monism of, 95  
     monistic Vedanta of, 167  
     opponents of, 146  
*Sankhya*, 14, 17, 19, 23-5, 44-5, 144  
*Sankhyan*, 147  
*Sankhyans*, 144, 148  
*Sankhya Purusha*, 44  
*Sannyasa*, 16-7, 54, 56, 132  
*Saraswati*, Dayananda, 17  
*Sariputta*, 141  
*Sarma, Professor, D. S.*, 66  
*Schelling*, 41  
*Schlick*, 4  
*Schopenhauer*, 99  
*Scriptures*, 10, 16, 20, 23, 26, 28, 41-2, 62, 101, 103, 111, 149, 156, 169, 171  
     of the Persians, 33  
     'Self-naughting', doctrine of, 166  
     Self-realization, 25  
     Self-surrender, 125-7  
*Semantics*, 4, 39  
*Shakespeare*, 86  
*Sita*, 122, 125  
*Siva Mahimna Stotra*, 35  
*Skanda (purana)*, 128  
*Sloka Vartika*, 85  
*Smrti*, 64, 82  
*Smrtis*, 65  
     Socialism, 57  
     Socrates, 38  
     Soma, 97  
     *Soma drink*, 96  
     Spinoza, 34  
     Sri Harsa, 76  
     Sruti (revelation), 39, 64, 92, 160  
     Srutis, 154  
     Stein, Sir Aurel, 33  
     Stoherbatsky, 174  
     Stoicism, 17, 50  
     Sudra, 157  
     Sufi writers, 84  
     Sugriva, 124  
     Suka, 109-10  
     'Suka Brahma', 110  
         See Suka  
     *Sunya Vada*, 161  
     Surpanakha, 124  
     Surya, 97  
     *Svadharmas*, 36, 68, 136  
         doctrine of, 172  
     *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, 34, 106  
     Swedenborg, 84  
     Symmachus, 11  
  
     TAGORE, 17, 105, 134, 175  
         poetic approach to Vedanta, 21  
     *Taittiriya Upanishad*, 46, 57, 100, 172  
     Tamasa (river), 120  
     Tantrik (method), 164  
     *Tapas*, 62  
     *Tapatraya*, 72  
     Tathagatha, 142  
     *Tat tvam asi*, 47  
     Taylor, A. E., 176  
     Theism, 23, 97, 136  
     Theravada (school), 142  
     Thibaut, 174  
     Thoreau, 100  
     Tilak, 129, 134  
     Timaeus, 85  
     Toynbee, Arnold, 65, 171  
     Transformation theory (*Parinama Vada*), 161  
     Tucci, 174



- UDAYANA, 85  
 Uddalaka, 105  
 Upanishad, 10, 13, 64, 93, 99, 102, 127  
 Upanishads, 20, 27, 53, 59, 62, 73, 93, 99-107, 143-5, 149, 154, 170  
 Uttara (Abhimanyu's wife), 110  
 Uttara Mimamsa, 145  
*Uttara Rama Carita*, 120  
  
 VAIKUNTHA, 115  
*Vairagya*, 105, 109, 116-7  
*Vaisesika*, 14, 17-9, 23, 44  
 Vaisnava, 118  
 Valmiki, 119-121, 125  
*Varaha* (Purana), 128  
*Varna dharmas*, 68  
 Varnasrama, 49  
 Varuna, 33, 94-7  
 Varuna (sage), 46  
 Varuni, 104  
 Vasistha, 123  
 Veda, 93, 144-5  
 Vedanta, 14, 17-8, 20-5, 28, 34, 50, 94, 99, 127-8, 133, 157, 164  
     Advaita, 47, 94  
     modern interpreters of, 145  
     monistic school of, 143  
     practical, 167  
     Ramakrishna's, 166  
     theistic schools of, 20, 44  
*Vedanta and the West*, 108  
 Vedanta Deshika, 76  
*Vedanta Sutra*, 10, 41  
*Vedanta Sutras*, 20, 143  
     commentary on the, 143, 145  
 Vedantins, 72, 146  
 Vedas, 20, 23, 33, 42, 64-5, 88, 92-7, 99, 106, 109, 120, 125, 144, 162, 167, 170  
  
 Venis, 174  
 Vibhisana, 124  
 Vidura, 55  
 Vijnana Bhiksu, 11  
*Vijnana Vada*, 161  
 Vinobaji, 134, 137  
*Virat purusa*, 94  
 Virochana, 104  
 Vishnu-rat, 110  
     See Parikshit  
 Visnu, 97, 110  
 Visvadevah, 96  
*Vivekachudamani*, 113  
 Vivekananda, 100, 134, 166-7, 170, 173  
 Vyasa, 66, 108-110, 112  
  
 WALLACE, ALFRED RUSSELL, 85  
 Warren, 174  
*What About India?*, 32  
 Whitehead, 12, 29  
 William, Sir Monier, 120  
 Williams, L. F. Rushbrook, 32  
 Winternitz, 174  
 Wittgenstein, Ludwig, 4  
 Woods, 174  
 Wordsworth, 100  
  
 YAJNAVALKYA, 82  
*Yajur Veda*, 70, 96  
 Yama (Lord of Death), 85, 103  
 Yeats, W. B. 100, 119  
*Yoga*, 14, 17, 20, 23, 44, 131, 135  
     eightfold path of, 19  
*Yoga Sutras*, 170  
 Yogi, 131-3  
 Yudhisthira, 69





